

Writing and Rewriting the Story of Solomon in Ancient Israel

Isaac Kalimi



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Solomon's image as a wise king and the founder of the Temple in Jerusalem has become a fixture of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic literature. Yet, there are essential differences between the various portraits of Solomon that are presented in the Hebrew Bible. In this volume, Isaac Kalimi explores these differences, which reflect divergent historical contexts, theological and didactic concepts, stylistic and literary techniques, and compositional methods among biblical historians. He highlights the uniqueness of each portrayal of Solomon – his character, birth, early life, ascension, and Temple building – through a close comparison of the early and late biblical historiographies. Whereas the authors of Samuel-Kings stay close to their sources and offer an apology for Solomon's kingship, including its more questionable aspects, the Chronicler freely rewrites his sources in order to present the life of Solomon as he wished it to be. The present volume will serve scholars and students seeking to understand biblical texts within their ancient Near Eastern contexts.

Isaac Kalimi is Gutenberg Research University Professor of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies and History of Ancient Israel, and Fellow of the Gutenberg Research College, at Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz; Foreign Member of the Belgian Royal Academy for Overseas Sciences, and Honorary Member of the Scandinavian Society for Iranian Studies.

Kalimi is one of the world's leading scholars in his fields. He is also regarded as a pioneer of intercultural and interdisciplinary scientific exchange between Jewish and Christian theologies. Kalimi has published numerous books and articles, including *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles* (recipient of the 2006 R. B. Y. Scott Book Award by the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies), *An Ancient Israelite Historian*, *The Retelling of Chronicles in Jewish Tradition and Literature*, *Fighting Over the Bible*, and *Metathesis in the Hebrew Bible*.

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ISAAC KALIMI

Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz



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of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication
and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain,
accurate or appropriate.

To the blessed memory of my beloved father,
Rabbi Nisan Kalimi,

איש חכם, תם וישר, ירא אלהים וסר מרע,

who passed away in the night of Yom Kippur,
October 30, 2017.

יהי שמו וזכרו מבורך תמיד לעולם ועד
חבל על דאבדין ולא משתכחין.

And

To Professor Peter Machinist,
with compliments,

עוד יובון בשיבה דשנים ורעננים יהיו

Psalms 92:15

Contents

<i>Figures</i>	<i>page</i> xii
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xiii
<i>Preface</i>	xvii

PART I INTRODUCTION, SOURCES, AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

CHAPTER 1	An Introduction	3
I.	State of Research	5
II.	Purpose	8
III.	Methods	11
IV.	Outline	13
CHAPTER 2	Sources: Epigraphical, Archaeological, and Biblical	19
I.	Availability of Epigraphical Evidence	19
II.	Archaeological Finds	24
III.	Biblical Sources	32
1.	The Books of Samuel and Kings	32
2.	The Book of Chronicles	37
3.	Allusions to Solomon in the Hagiographa	39
IV.	Conclusion	40
CHAPTER 3	Challenging Recent Dismissals of the United Monarchy	41
I.	Introduction	41
II.	Garbini's Dismissal of the United Monarchy	42
III.	Other Minimalist / Revisionist Approaches	47

IV. Is There Any Foundation for the Minimalist / Revisionist Approaches?	50
V. Conclusion	63
CHAPTER 4 Solomon's Kingdom: Historical Evaluation and Case Studies	66
I. Historical Evaluation	66
II. Case Studies	69
1. The Historicity of Solomon's Temple	69
2. Jerusalem under David and Solomon	76
3. The Size of David's and Solomon's Kingdom	81
4. King Solomon's Harem	89
III. Conclusion	91
PART II SOLOMON'S BIRTH, RISE, AND TEMPLE BUILDING: LITERARY AND HISTORIOGRAPHICAL OBSERVATIONS	
CHAPTER 5 Solomon's Birth Story and Its Setting in 2 Samuel 10–12: Redaction History versus Compositional Unity	97
I. Introduction	97
II. The Historical Setting of Solomon's Birth Story	98
III. Redaction History versus Compositional Unity	102
1. Redaction History	102
2. The Unity of the Composition and Its Literary and Theological Structures	113
A. The Composition	113
B. Literary Structures	114
(a) From External (Periphery) to Internal (Center)	114
(b) Concentric Circled Stories	114
(c) <i>Inclusio</i>	115
(d) Contrasting David's Actions	116
C. Further Literary Methods	117
D. Rhetorical Contrast: The Unnamed First Child – The Double-Named Second One	120
E. The Theological Structure	122
IV. Conclusion	123
V. Excursus: Who Gave the Name "Shlomoh" to the Second-Born Child?	125
CHAPTER 6 Solomon as the Lord's Beloved King in Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Contexts	127
I. Introduction	127

II. “Solomon” and “Yedidyah”: The Biblical Text and Scholarship	130
III. Towards an Understanding of “Solomon” and “Yedidyah” – The Beloved of the Lord	135
IV. New Names, God’s Love, and Royal Apologia: The Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Sources	141
1. Biblical Sources	141
2. Ancient Near Eastern Sources	142
A. Mesopotamia: Sargon of Akkad and Sargon II of Ashur	143
(a) Sargon of Akkad	145
(b) Sargon II of Ashur	149
B. Anatolia: King Hattušili III of Hatti Land	151
C. Egypt: Queen Hatshepsut and Other Pharaohs	154
D. Persia: Xerxes I	158
V. The Concept of Divine Love in 2 Samuel 12 and Ancient Near Eastern Literature	159
VI. Conclusion	162
CHAPTER 7 Solomon’s Birth and Names in Second Temple Period Literature	165
I. Introduction	165
II. Solomon’s Birth and His Place among Bathsheba’s Sons in Chronicles	166
III. Solomon’s Birth in the <i>Wisdom of Solomon</i>	175
IV. The Names of Solomon in the Second Temple Period Literature	176
1. The Meanings of “Shlomoh” in Chronicles	176
2. The Name “Yedidyah” in Psalms and Nehemiah, and Its Absence from Other Second Temple Literature	178
3. Ben Sira’s Wordplays on the Names “Shlomoh” and “Yedidyah”	179
4. Was “Qohelet” the Third Name of Solomon?	181
V. Conclusion: The Ambiguity of Solomon	183
CHAPTER 8 Solomon’s Pre-Monarchic Life in Biblical Historiography	185
I. Introduction	185
II. Solomon: From Birth to Throne Accession	185

1. Was Nathan Solomon's Guardian?	186
2. Solomon's Age and Marital Status at the Time of His Accession	189
III. Conclusion	191
CHAPTER 9 Solomon's Physical Appearance and Leadership in Biblical Historiography	192
I. Solomon's Physical Appearance	192
II. Is Song of Songs 5:10-16 a Description of Solomon's Physical Appearance?	197
III. Conclusion	199
CHAPTER 10 Solomon's Succession to the Throne: History and Contrasting Historiographies	201
I. Introduction	201
II. Solomon's Succession in History	202
1. The Last Days of King David: Personal and Political Crisis	202
2. Did Adonijah Rebel against His Father David?	205
3. Conspiracy in the Court: Nathan and Bathsheba Facing David	211
III. The Legitimacy of Solomon's Succession according to Kings	217
1. The Literary Unity of the Succession Narrative	218
2. Apologetic Features in the Succession Narrative	227
IV. The Legitimacy of Solomon's Succession according to Chronicles	230
V. Conclusion	235
CHAPTER 11 The Coronation of Solomon: David's Testament and Its Implementation	237
I. The Coronation Ceremony: Kings versus Chronicles	237
II. Were There Two Coronations?	240
III. Sitting on "the Throne of the Lord"	242
IV. Solomon's Establishment: The Concluding Words	244
V. "David's Testament"	245
1. 1 Kings 2:1-9	245
2. The Chronistic History	252
VI. The Fulfillment of David's Testament: The First Actions of King Solomon	255
VII. Conclusion	257

CHAPTER 12	“Why Is the City in an Uproar?”: Solomon’s Coronation Story in Its Biblical Context	259
I.	Introduction	259
II.	Loud Noises Heard Far Away at Solomon’s Coronation and Elsewhere in Samuel-Kings	259
1.	Solomon’s Coronation	259
2.	Joash’s Coronation	261
3.	The Ark Narrative	262
	A. Eben-Haezer Battle	262
	B. From Shiloh to the House of Eli	263
III.	Occurrences of the Motif Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible	265
1.	The Late Biblical Historiography: Chronicles and Ezra	265
2.	Reflection of the Motif in the Joseph Story	266
3.	Counterexample: The Book of Esther	267
IV.	Between Literary Transition and Type-Scene	268
V.	Conclusion	270
CHAPTER 13	Solomon’s Temple Building and Its Divine Approval in Biblical Historiographies	272
I.	Introduction: A Literary Examination	272
II.	David, Solomon, and the Permission to Build the Temple	273
III.	The Heavenly–Earthly and Father–Son Collaborations	277
IV.	The Place of the Temple Building in Solomon’s Story	278
V.	Modification of Solomon’s Temple Description according to Moses’ Tabernacle and Zerubbabel’s Temple	279
VI.	The Divine Approval of the Temple and Its Unceasing Existence	290
1.	The Divine Approval of the Temple	290
2.	The Unceasing Existence of the Temple	293
VII.	Conclusion	294
CHAPTER 14	Writing and Rewriting the Story of Solomon	296
I.	Summary and Synthesis	296
II.	The Man and the Myth: Solomon in History and Historiography	307
	<i>Bibliography</i>	316
	<i>Index of Authors</i>	345
	<i>Index of Names and Subjects</i>	351
	<i>Index of Sources</i>	364

Figures

Cover image	Head of Solomon (marble), Benedetto Antelami (1150–1230; Museo Diocesano, Parma, Italy)	
1	Solomon's Judgment, a detail of a window in the Katharinenkirche, Oppenheim (Rhineland-Pfalz, Germany)	<i>page 4</i>
2	Shishak Inscription at Karnak	22
3	Tel Dan Inscription	24
4	Coronation of Solomon, Jean Pichore (1503), Paris, Bibliotheque Mazarine Ms. 1581 folio 154	239
5	King Solomon, Cathedral of Monreale, Monreale (Sicily, Italy)	306

Abbreviations

ABR	<i>Australian Biblical Review</i>
AfO	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i>
AJSL	<i>The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures</i>
BA	<i>The Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BAR	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
Beit Mikra	<i>Beit Mikra: Journal for the Study of the Bible and Its World</i> , quarterly founded by the Israel Society for Biblical Research
BZ	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
CAD	I. J. Gelb, et al. (eds.), <i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> (Chicago: Oriental Institute and Glückstadt: J. J. Augustin, 1956–2010).
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CurBR	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
CurBS	<i>Currents in Research: Biblical Studies</i>
ExpTim	<i>The Expository Times</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
IOS	<i>Israel Oriental Studies</i>
JANER	<i>Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions</i>
JANESCU	<i>Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JCS	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>

JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JS	<i>Journal for Semitics</i>
JSIJ	<i>Jewish Studies, an Internet Journal</i>
JSOR	<i>Journal of the Society of Oriental Research</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LXX	The Septuagint Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible
MT	The Masoretic Text, the traditional text of the Hebrew Bible, as preserved by the Jewish Masoretic scribes
NEA	<i>Near Eastern Archaeology</i> (formerly <i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>)
PEQ	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
RB	<i>Revue biblique</i>
RSO	<i>Rivista degli studi orientali</i>
SJOT	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
ST	<i>Studia Theologica: Nordic Journal of Theology</i>
TRu	<i>Theologische Rundschau</i>
TynBul	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
TZ	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WTJ	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
ZA	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie</i>
ZAH	<i>Zeitschrift für Althebraistik</i>
ZÄS	<i>Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde</i>
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZDPV	<i>Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>

BIBLICAL BOOKS

Gen	Genesis
Exod	Exodus
Lev	Leviticus
Num	Numbers
Deut	Deuteronomy
Josh	Joshua
Judg	Judges
1–2 Sam	1–2 Samuel
1–2 Kgs	1–2 Kings
Isa	Isaiah

Jer	Jeremiah
Ezek	Ezekiel
Hos	Hosea
Joel	Joel
Amos	Amos
Obad	Obadiah
Jon	Jonah
Mic	Micah
Nah	Nahum
Hab	Habakkuk
Zeph	Zephaniah
Hag	Haggai
Zech	Zechariah
Mal	Malachi
Ps	Psalms
Prov	Proverbs
Job	Job
Song	Song of Songs
Ruth	Ruth
Lam	Lamentations
Qoh / Eccl	Qohelet / Ecclesiastes
Esth	Esther
Dan	Daniel
Ezra	Ezra
Neh	Nehemiah
1-2 Chr	1-2 Chronicles
1-2-3-4 Macc	1-2-3-4 Maccabees
1-2 Esdr	1-2 Esdras
Sir	<i>The Wisdom of Ben Sira</i> / Sirach / Ecclesiasticus
Matt	Matthew
Mark	Mark
Luke	Luke
John	John
Acts	Acts of the Apostles
Rom	Romans
1-2 Cor	1-2 Corinthians
Gal	Galatians
Eph	Ephesians
Phil	Philippians
Col	Colossians

1-2 Thess	1-2 Thessalonians
1-2 Tim	1-2 Timothy
Tit	Titus
Phlm	Philemon
Heb	Hebrews
Jas	James
1-2 Pet	1-2 Peter
1-2-3 John	1-2-3 John
Jude	Jude (Judas)
Rev	Revelation

Preface

The volume *Writing and Rewriting the Story of Solomon in Ancient Israel* offers the fruit of half a decade of research and reflection on the well-known Israelite monarch, Solomon. It was written during my time at several eminent European institutions, including while I was Fulbright Distinguished Professor at the University of Salzburg (Austria, 2011), Fellow of the Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium for Science and the Arts (Brussels, 2013), Fellow of the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study (Uppsala, 2014/15), and Gutenberg Research University Professor of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies and History of Ancient Israel at Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz (since October 2013). Some chapters were delivered as guest lectures at various universities and international conferences: I was honored to read [Chapter Four](#) at the Faculty of Theology, Uppsala University, Sweden, on February 12, 2015; [Chapter Five](#) was delivered at the 75th International Conference of the Catholic Biblical Association at the University of Notre Dame on July 30, 2012; I read [Chapter Seven](#) at the International Conference on *King Solomon in the Bible, Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, which was held at the Catholic University of Leuven (Belgium) in cooperation with the University of Nijmegen (The Netherlands), on September 30, 2009; I lectured on [Chapter Nine](#) at Philipps University of Marburg, on May 20, 2016, and I delivered [Chapter Ten](#) at the Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Oxford, and at the Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge, on March 3 and 5, 2014.

Earlier forms of some chapters have been previously published in different places.¹ For the sake of this volume, however, they have all been thoroughly revised, greatly expanded, updated, and synthesized. This volume represents my comprehensive view, in one place, regarding various issues on King Solomon in the ancient Israelite historical writings.

Though [Chapters Two](#) and [Three](#) address a hot topic at the moment, I hope that readers will not neglect the foremost significance of the rest of this volume, which is focused primarily on the literary and historiographical methods of the early and late biblical authors.

In order to be accessible to the broadest possible audience, while also remaining useful to a broad range of scholars, all primary sources are presented both in their original languages and with an English translation. Except where otherwise noted, all translations from non-English languages are my own.

My sincere appreciation goes to the president of Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz, Professor Dr. Georg Krausch, to the former director of the Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium for Science and the Arts, Professor Dr. Marc De Mey, and to the principal of the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study, Professor Dr. Björn Wittrock, for their kind invitations and gracious hospitality.

My thanks go also to Professor Dr. Joseph Verheyden of the Catholic University of Leuven, Professor John Barton of the University of Oxford, Dr. Katharine J. Dell of the University of Cambridge, Professor Dr. Göran Eidevall of Uppsala University, and Dr. Martina Kepper of Philipps University of Marburg, for their kind invitations. Further, I would like to express my thanks to my talented assistant, Dr. Ken S. Brown, for reading the manuscript and providing a number of useful suggestions, and to Dr. Beatrice Rehl, Director of Publishing, Humanities, at Cambridge University Press, and for Ms. Katherine Tengco Barbaro, Senior Content Manager at Cambridge University Press, for their friendly cooperation and for the design of the volume.

¹ See I. Kalimi, "Human and Musical Sounds and Their Hearing Elsewhere as a Literary Device in the Biblical Narratives," *VT* 60 (2010), pp. 565–570; idem, "King Solomon: His Birth and Names in the Second Temple Period Literature," *Bib* 93 (2012), pp. 481–499; idem, "The Rise of Solomon in the Ancient Israelite Historiography," in J. Verheyden (ed.), *The Figure of Solomon in Jewish, Christian and Islamic Tradition: King, Sage and Architect*, Themes in Biblical Narrative 16 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2013), pp. 7–44; and, idem, "Reexamining 2 Samuel 10–12: Redaction History *versus* Compositional Unity," *CBQ* 78 (2016), pp. 24–46; and, idem, "Love of God and *Apologia* for a King: Solomon's Birth Story in Its Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Contexts," *JANER* 17 (2017), pp. 28–63.

PART I

INTRODUCTION, SOURCES, AND HISTORICAL
BACKGROUND

CHAPTER I

An Introduction

“And the king said: ‘Divide the living child in two!’” (1 Kgs 3:25). With this startling judgment and its revealing consequences, King Solomon provoked the swift resolution of a dispute between two harlots over the identity of their children, and became immortalized as the model of a just and brilliant judge. This story in 1 Kings 3:16–27 is presented as the preeminent illustration of Solomon’s exceptional wisdom, which the Lord had just granted to him in a dream at Gibeon, reported immediately before this (1 Kgs 3:4–15). This account emphasizes that “I [the Lord] have given you a wise and understanding heart; so that there was none like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you” (1 Kgs 3:12 // 2 Chr 1:12). The biblical author/editor connects the stories with the conclusion: “And all Israel heard of the *king’s judgment*, and stood in awe of the king, because they saw *the wisdom of God* was in him to execute justice” (1 Kgs 3:28; see also 1 Kgs 5:9–14 [ET 4:29–34]).

Solomon’s wisdom is also highlighted by other biblical passages, for example: “The Lord exalted Solomon highly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him royal majesty such as no king *in Israel* had before him” (1 Chr 29:25). Nehemiah goes even further, affirming that “among the *many nations* there was no king like him” (Neh 13:26).¹ Moreover, Solomon’s reputation as a wise man, a prolific scholar and poet, was tremendously exalted in biblical works such as Proverbs, Qohelet, and the Song of Songs, and in postbiblical texts such as the *Wisdom of Solomon*,

¹ See also 2 Chr 1:1; and the praise of Solomon’s wisdom by the Queen of Sheba as described in 1 Kgs 10:3–9 (// 2 Chr 9:2–8).



Figure 1 Solomon's Judgment, a detail of a window in the Katharinenkirche, Oppenheim. (Rhineland-Pfalz, Germany; private photography).

the *Testament of Solomon*, and the *Psalms of Solomon*, as well as in numerous rabbinic Midrashim,² in the New Testament (e.g., Matt 12:42 // Luke 11:31; see also Matt 6:28–30), and in various folktales. As a result, in Jewish and Christian cultures, as well as in Islam, Solomon has been seen as the wisest and greatest king of ancient Israel, and one of the most significant, familiar, and widely admired figures of ancient history. King Solomon's repute as the builder of the Temple in Jerusalem is also well known, and the descriptions of his judgment of the two harlots, as well as his visit from the Queen of Sheba, have become fixtures of Jewish and Christian literature, music, and art, including depictions on the walls of many old synagogues and churches.³ Even in European

² See, for example, Babylonian Talmud, *Berachot* 57b; *Song of Songs Rabbah* 1:1, 5–8, 11; and *Qohelet Rabbah* 1:2–3; 2:5.

³ See, for instance, the fresco on the walls of the Synagogue at Dura-Europos; I. Kalimi, *The Retelling of Chronicles in Jewish Tradition and Literature: A Historical Journey* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009), pp. 123–132; idem, *Das Chronikbuch und seine Chronik: Zur Entstehung und Rezeption eines biblischen Buches*, *Fuldaer Studien* 17 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2013), pp. 149–157. Cf. also the portrait of Solomon from the fourteenth-century mosaics of “David and Solomon” at the Basilica San Marco (St. Mark's Basilica), Venice, Italy: www.gettyimages.co.uk/license/152207864; and the King Solomon mosaic inside the Cathedral of Monreale, near Palermo, Sicily, Italy: <http://01varvara.files.wordpress.com/2011/08/01-anonymous-king-solomon-duomo-di-monreale-monreale-sicily-it.jpg> (both accessed Nov. 2, 2016). The judgment of the two harlots (1 Kgs 3:16–28) was especially popular in Europe. For example, it appears on a beautiful window of the Katharinenkirche, Oppenheim am Rhein (Germany). It also appears – together with other scenes from Solomon's life – in a series of frescos by Raphael at the Vatican (known as the Raphael Loggie; ca. 1519), which influenced Antoon Claeissens (Belgium, 1538–1613), and Nicolas Poussin (France, 1594–1665); for other examples, see the article on “Solomon” in F. Skolnik and M. Berenbaum (eds.), *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 2nd ed. (Detroit: Thomson Gale / Jerusalem: Keter, 2007), vol. 18, pp. 755–764, esp. pp. 761–762 (“in Art,” signed by

and American court contexts, Solomon has taken an important position among the great figures of the ancient world. For example, in Amsterdam's seventeenth-century town hall, as well as in those of many other Dutch and Belgian cities, the image of Solomon's judgment was painted directly behind the judges' bench.⁴ Solomon also appears alongside Moses, Hammurabi, Solon, and other ancient lawgivers in the South Wall Frieze of the United States Supreme Court Building (completed in 1935).⁵

Yet, for all this glorious reputation and collective familiarity, the story of Solomon is not straightforwardly told. There are essential differences between the portraits of Solomon that were presented by the early and late Israelite historiographers, by later Jewish, Christian, and Muslim writers, and by modern historians. The *main* purpose of this volume is, first and foremost, to explore the differences between the early and late biblical historiographies, that is, in the books of Samuel-Kings and Chronicles, particularly regarding the birth, rise, and reign of Solomon.

I. STATE OF RESEARCH

In recent years, a number of volumes have been published on various aspects of King Solomon's life and legacy, particularly on his historicity.⁶ These studies are discussed at the appropriate places in the following chapters. However, none of them offers a sustained

Ed.), and pp. 762–763 (“in Music,” B. Bayer). As examples for Solomon in music, it is worth mentioning the successful opera from 1875 by the Jewish musician, Carl Goldmark (1830–1915), *Die Königen von Saba* (*The Queen of Sheba*); Paul Heyse's *Die Weisheit Solomons* (*The Wisdom of Solomon*; 1886); and James B. Alexander's *King Solomon* (1899). For further musical works on Solomon and bibliographical references, see M. Stern, *Bible & Music: Influences of the Old Testament on Western Music* (Jersey City: Ktav, 2011), pp. 232–233, 249–258 (on texts from Samuel-Kings), and 481–483 (on texts from Chronicles). There are also many musical works based on the biblical books Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, and Proverbs, which are ascribed to Solomon.

⁴ See K. Fremantle, “The Open *Vierschaar* of Amsterdam's Seventeenth-Century Town Hall as a Setting for the City's Justice,” *Oud Holland* 77 (1962), pp. 206–234, esp. pp. 211, 215, and 227.

⁵ See “Courtroom Friezes: South and North Walls: Information Sheet” (Office of the Curator, Supreme Court of the United States, May 8, 2003: www.supremecourt.gov/about/northandsouthwalls.pdf (accessed September 15, 2015)).

⁶ See for example, L. K. Handy (ed.), *The Age of Solomon: Scholarship at the Turn of the Millennium*, Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East 11 (Leiden:

examination and comparison of the literary and historiographical portrayals of Solomon in Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, while setting these in the context of broader parallels within the Hebrew Bible and the history of the ancient Near East.⁷ For example, Thilo Rudnig has analyzed the redaction history of the Succession Narrative in Samuel-Kings (particularly 2 Sam 7, 11–19 and 1 Kgs 1–2), but does not offer a comparison with Chronicles and has little to say about the sophisticated literary and theological shaping of this material, or its ancient Near Eastern parallels.⁸ Pekka Särkiö offers a similar kind of analysis of 1 Kings 3–5 and 9–11, again with little attention paid to the comparison with Chronicles.⁹

E. J. Brill, 1997); M. Pietsch, “Dieser ist der Sproß Davids...”: Studien zur Rezeptionsgeschichte der Nathanverheißung im alttestamentlichen, zwischentestamentlichen und neutestamentlichen Schrifttum, Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 100 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2003); R. Lux (ed.), *Ideales Königtum: Studien zu David und Salomo*, Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte 16 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2005); P. S. F. van Keulen, *Two Versions of the Solomon Narrative: An Inquiry into the Relationship between MT 1 Kgs. 2–11 and LXX 3 Reg. 2–11*, *Vetus Testamentum Supplement* 104 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2005); I. Finkelstein and N. A. Silberman, *David and Solomon: In Search of the Bible’s Sacred Kings and the Roots of the Western Tradition* (New York: Free Press, 2006); T. A. Rudnig, *Davids Thron: Redaktionskritische Studien zur Geschichte von der Thronnachfolge Davids*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 358 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2006); W. Oswald, *Nathan der Prophet: Eine Untersuchung zu 2. Samuel 7 und 12 und 1. Könige 1*, Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten Testaments 94 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2008); P. James and P. G. van der Veen (eds.), *Solomon and Shishak: Current Perspectives from Archaeology, Epigraphy, History and Chronology Proceedings of the Third BICANE Colloquium Held at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge 26–27 March 2011*, BAR International Series 2732 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2015); Y. Garfinkel and M. Mumcuoglu, *Solomon’s Temple and Palace: New Archaeological Discoveries* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Koren, 2015).

⁷ For a full discussion of these sources, see [Chapter Two](#). Though in the Hebrew canon Samuel and Kings are presented as separate books, it is debated to what extent their origins are distinct from one another (see also [Chapter Ten](#), note 57). Nonetheless, this volume will regularly refer to them as “Samuel-Kings” as a complex that presents the early biblical historiography, in contrast to the later biblical historiography in the book of Chronicles. This term of convenience should not be taken to mean that Samuel and Kings are necessarily fully unified.

⁸ See Rudnig, *Davids Thron: Redaktionskritische Studien zur Geschichte von der Thronnachfolge Davids*. For detailed critiques of Rudnig’s study, see [Chapters Five](#), [§III](#), [1](#), and [Ten](#), [§III](#), [1](#).

⁹ See P. Särkiö, *Die Weisheit und Macht Salomos in der israelitischen Historiographie: Eine Traditions- und redaktionskritische Untersuchung über 1 Kön 3–5 und 9–11*, Schriften der Finnischen Exegetischen Gesellschaft 60 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994). Incidentally, it turns out that the parts of Solomon’s life that I focus on are precisely those Särkiö skipped.

Andrew Knapp has compared the stories of David's and Solomon's rise to kingship in Samuel-Kings with the royal apologies found elsewhere in the ancient Near East, but he overlooks some key aspects of that comparison regarding 2 Samuel 11–12, and also does not compare these portrayals with the very different account in Chronicles.¹⁰

A number of studies also focus on Solomon's later reception in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic literature, which falls beyond the scope of this monograph, but they say relatively less about how he is portrayed in the biblical texts themselves.¹¹

In addition, several popular or semipopular books have been published on King Solomon and his father, David.¹² Unfortunately, they mainly just paraphrase or selectively revise the biblical accounts, without sufficient interaction with the critical scholarship, and only occasionally engage in any detailed comparisons between the books of Samuel-Kings and Chronicles.¹³

¹⁰ See A. Knapp, *Royal Apologetic in the Ancient Near East*, Writings from the Ancient World Supplement Series 4 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), see [Chapter Six](#).

¹¹ For example, P. A. Torijano, *Solomon the Esoteric King: From King to Magus, Development of a Tradition*, Supplements to the *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 73 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2002), includes only one brief chapter on the entire Hebrew Bible (pp. 8–25); G. Sasson, "In the Footsteps of the Tradition about Solomon the Magician in the Literature of the Sages," *JSIJ* 6 (2007), pp. 37–53. Similarly, of the essays in J. Verheyden (ed.), *The Figure of Solomon in Jewish, Christian and Islamic Tradition: King, Sage and Architect*, Themes in Biblical Narrative 16 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2013), the only ones that focus on the biblical accounts are I. Kalimi, "The Rise of Solomon in the Ancient Israelite Historiography," pp. 7–44, P. Särkiö, "Solomon in History and Tradition," pp. 45–56, and W. Zwickel, "Der Tempel Salomos im Kontext der Ikonographie und der archäologischen Funde," pp. 57–84 (see [Chapter Four](#), §II, 1 and [Chapter Thirteen](#)). The other essays consider the portrayals of Solomon in later literature, such as Josephus, the New Testament, Rabbinic Literature, and Islamic sources.

¹² See A. Kunz-Lübcke, *Salomo: Von der Weisheit eines Frauenliebhabers*, Biblische Gestalten 8 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2004); A. Schick, *Irrt die Bibel? Auf der Suche nach König David und Salomo: Mythos oder Wahrheit?* (Hammerbrücke: Jota, 2004); W. Brueggemann, *Solomon: Israel's Ironic Icon of Human Achievement*, Studies on Personalities of the Old Testament (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005); S. Weitzman, *Solomon: The Lure of Wisdom* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011); J. Baden, *The Historical David: The Real Life of an Invented Hero* (New York: HarperCollins, 2013), and J. L. Wright, *David, King of Israel, and Caleb in Biblical Memory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014). For other discussions of Solomon and his reign, see [Chapter Three](#).

¹³ But see, for example, Kunz-Lübcke, *Salomo*, pp. 151–156, Brueggemann, *Solomon*, pp. 160–180, and Wright, *David, King of Israel*, pp. 148–166.

Further, while commentaries on the book of Chronicles do compare the picture of Solomon in Samuel-Kings with that in Chronicles, they do so only briefly and in regard to particular passages.¹⁴ As is appropriate to the genre of a commentary, their comparisons are neither systematic nor comprehensive, and many of the specific texts and issues focused on in this volume have not received sufficient attention, if any. This monograph therefore offers not only new and original observations regarding individual details of the text, but also a deep analysis and coherent synthesis of the images of Solomon in the early and late biblical historiographies.

II. PURPOSE

The *main* purpose of this volume is not to reconstruct “the historical Solomon” and his period, but rather to analyze and compare the biblical accounts of Solomon. These accounts in the early and late biblical historiographies are the only surviving ancient Israelite historical writings concerning this king and his time. These writings have been composed in differing ages and circumstances. They reflect dissimilar historical and theological approaches, and use different styles, literary techniques, and methods. The volume attempts, therefore, to reveal the uniqueness of each portrayal of “Solomon” through a close reading of these histories

¹⁴ For instance, among the more recent commentaries, Sara Japhet has a section in her introduction regarding the Chronicler’s use of sources, which includes a single paragraph on those regarding Solomon (S. Japhet, *I & II Chronicles: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library [Louisville: Westminster / John Knox, 1993], pp. 14–23, esp. pp. 16–17). She also begins each chapter of the commentary with a short section on the “Structure, Sources and Form” of the text, but these summaries do little more than list the parallels, omissions, and additions between Samuel-Kings and Chronicles, with brief discussions (e.g., pp. 522–524 regarding 2 Chronicles 1). Hugh Williamson devotes even less space to the issue, including three pages in his introduction on Chronicles’ sources as a whole, but only discussing this issue here and there in the course of the commentary; for instance, he includes one page on Chronicles’ use of Kings regarding Solomon (H. G. M. Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, New Century Bible Commentary [Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans / London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1982], pp. 21–23, 192–193). Compare also, for example, R. B. Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word Books, 1987); S. L. McKenzie, *1–2 Chronicles*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004); R. W. Klein, *2 Chronicles: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012). John Jarick goes so far as to “set aside” the comparison of Chronicles with Samuel-Kings, which he describes as “its rival” (J. Jarick, *2 Chronicles*, Readings: A New Biblical Commentary [Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007], p. 2).

in view of their own theological, ideological, and didactic concepts, as well as their literary features and compositional methods, and the supposed times, places, and conditions of their writing. The goal is to elucidate how Solomon's birth, naming, early life, ascension, and Temple building are depicted in each of these accounts, as well as how he himself is described and characterized.

A systematic investigation of Solomon's narratives in Samuel-Kings and Chronicles can only be undertaken on the basis of such a detailed analysis of each text on its own, as well as a close comparison between them. Such a comparison makes bold the distinctiveness of each, revealing two incompatible and irreconcilable portraits (or, if you wish, "masks") of King Solomon, particularly regarding his birth, rise, and building of the Temple. Each presents the image of Solomon that its author desired to present for contemporary and subsequent audiences.

This analysis also highlights the differing approaches that the early and late biblical historiographers took to their sources, and undermines recent challenges to the conclusion that Samuel-Kings served as the literary basis for Chronicles. For example, A. Graeme Auld has attempted to demolish the consensus that the core source of Chronicles is Samuel-Kings, which therefore has preferred historical status over Chronicles.¹⁵ However, this approach is overly simplistic, dismissing the results of two centuries of diachronic research. It has therefore been sharply criticized from different viewpoints by a number of scholars, and should be absolutely rejected.¹⁶ By contrast, this volume supports the well-established and widely accepted view in biblical-historical scholarship that the books of

¹⁵ See his book, A. G. Auld, *Kings without Privilege: David and Moses in the Story of the Bible's Kings* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994). Based on Auld's thesis, Raymond F. Person has recently argued that "the Deuteronomistic history and the book of Chronicles are Persian-period historiographies produced by two competing scribal guilds, the Deuteronomistic school and the Chronistic school, but that these historiographies are nevertheless based on the same broader tradition, including a common exilic source" (*The Deuteronomistic History and the Book of Chronicles: Scribal Works in an Oral World*, *Ancient Israel and Its Literature* 6 [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010], p. 163).

¹⁶ See the detailed discussion and bibliography by I. Kalimi, "Kings with Privilege: The Core Source(s) of the Parallel Texts between the Deuteronomistic and Chronistic Histories," *RB* 119 (2012), pp. 498–517; for a slightly revised German version, see "Die Quelle(n) der Textparallelen zwischen Samuel-Könige und Chronik," in U. Becker and H. Bezzel (eds.), *Rereading the Relecture? The Question of (Post)chronistic Influence in the Latest Redactions of the Books of Samuel*, *Forschungen zum Alten Testament* 2/66 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), pp. 11–30. See also [Chapter Three](#), and [Chapter Thirteen](#), §V.

Samuel-Kings were composed sometime earlier than the book of Chronicles, and that they form the Chronicler's primary *Vorlage* (the German technical term refers to a text's primary source) for the parallel texts.¹⁷ It demonstrates that the Chronicler frequently rewrote the material concerning Solomon found in Samuel-Kings, while showing that the author(s)/editor(s) of the latter were generally much more careful to present their sources with minimal interference.

In previous publications, I have examined in great detail the various methods used by the Chronicler to rewrite and reuse his sources in Samuel-Kings and elsewhere. In this volume, I show how those methods are employed in a sustained manner in a particular case, by investigating on a deep level how Solomon is portrayed in each of these works, both on their own *and* in comparison and contrast with one another. That is, a comparison must always begin with a proper investigation of each text independently – in its own historical and literary settings – but ultimately, neither one of these particular texts can be fully understood on its own. It is only through the comparison of what each has included, excluded, or altered that we see the full breadth of their literary and historiographical methods, as well as their unique theological concerns and emphases. This is also the only reasonable basis for any conclusion regarding the historical reliability of the respective accounts.

In order to be appropriately understood, the descriptions of these biblical books must be read against their own historical backgrounds. In other words, one cannot properly analyze the literary and theological methods of Samuel-Kings, nor fully understand how Chronicles has reworked its *Vorlage*, if one assumes that the entire story of Solomon's kingdom is fictional. As seen in subsequent chapters, much that is said concerning Solomon in Samuel-Kings makes best sense as a response to presumed events in Solomon's life. This is particularly true where the narrator strives to put a positive spin on the more problematic actions attributed to Solomon and his father David – such as David's affair with Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11–12, and Solomon's usurpation of the throne in 1 Kings 1–2. This apologetic function of the biblical accounts of Solomon can be best understood against the historical background of his period, as

¹⁷ For a detailed history of research on the relationship between Samuel-Kings and Chronicles, see I. Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005; reprinted 2012), pp. 2–11; idem, "Kings with Privilege," pp. 499–505.

far as this can be reconstructed, and in light of its broader ancient Near Eastern context. By contrast, the Chronicler often simply omits or radically rewrites these stories, reflecting the later and very different historical context in which he was writing.

III. METHODS

In recent years, the fields of biblical and historical studies have moved swiftly (and still continue to move) with different perspectives on the biblical texts, giving rise to many fresh questions and approaches. However, the texts themselves are sometimes lost in the shuffle. This volume seeks to focus on the portrayals of Solomon that have survived, challenging some previous, speculative presuppositions and methodological approaches, and reevaluating and comparing the biblical texts for their own sake, situating them within their respective historical settings. It pursues a rational balance between the excessive skepticism of the so-called minimalists, revisionists, or nihilists (who reject *a priori* the basic historicity of the Hebrew Bible unless it is proved by extrabiblical material), and the overly naive readings of the so-called fundamentalists, positivists (who accept the complete historicity of the Hebrew Bible), or maximalists (who reject only what is directly disproved by reliable extrabiblical material).

Avoiding such extremes requires that every text be carefully evaluated and contextualized, through close investigation and comparison with everything that is known about the linguistic, cultural, religious, historical, and geographical backgrounds of the societies and individuals that stand behind the text. It calls for critical analysis of the biblical text as well as of the epigraphical and archaeological finds from various angles, and seeks potential integration of them. In other words, no source should be assumed to offer unmitigated access to history or truth. Instead, every claim made within a given text must be delineated on a linguistic level (philology, syntax, etc.), and compared with relevant literary parallels from elsewhere in the Bible or in the historical, cultural, and religious settings of the ancient Near East and the Mediterranean more broadly. Every source should be weighed against what is known from archaeology and anthropology about the culture, location, and situations from which the text derives, and those it strives to describe. Further, the claims of each text must be examined in terms of their literary contexts within the document as a whole, in view of the text's rhetorical, theological and ideological purposes and presuppositions.

This also means not simply stripping away from the text elements that appear to us to be implausible, exaggerated, or legendary, but rather acknowledging that every text reflects its author's attempt to present what he or she knows or thinks in a language that makes sense to his or her readers. Thus, not only should those details that appear plausible on the background of such wide-ranging investigations be used to build up a picture (however fragmentary) of the situation that the text describes, but also, the elements that reflect that author's own bias and distortions should be taken as valuable evidence for the text's own purposes and methods. For this reason, the historical analysis of a source cannot be fully separated from a literary, linguistic, theological, and ideological analysis, though each pays attention to different aspects of the text.

Such an approach stands in the mainstream of scholarship ("the middle or golden way"), for which the historicity of the text is a matter that should be carefully evaluated on a case-by-case basis (then combined to create a larger picture of an event, figure, or idea). This approach is diachronic and interdisciplinary, and considers the relevant archaeological finds in their current status without bias or overprivilege, while researching the biblical text in its own complexity. This represents and strengthens reasonable and responsible scholarly standards in the study of biblical literature, and ancient Israelite history and historiography, as many mainstream biblical scholars, historians, and archaeologists maintain.¹⁸ It offers a multidisciplinary, wide-ranging and qualitative treatment of the Hebrew and cognate texts and findings that may relate to Solomon.

Portions of this study – such as [Chapter Six](#) – synthesize the biblical texts with extrabiblical written sources from the ancient Near East, where the latter are available and relevant. Others combine philological and historical-critical approaches with literary and comparative methods, without neglecting important theological insights (such as [Chapters Five, Ten, and Eleven](#)). The study applies all of these methods to each of the distinctive accounts of Solomon in the early biblical literature (especially Samuel-Kings) and in the late biblical literature (especially Chronicles), on their own, as the foundations for a deep comparison and analysis of each portrayal with the others.

¹⁸ For more details and scholarly references, see [Chapters Two to Four](#).

The volume draws a clear distinction between the history of events and that of ideas, as well as between “history,” in the sense of what events actually happened, and how (to cite Leopold von Ranke, *wie es eigentlich gewesen* [ist]),¹⁹ and “historical-writing” (“historiography”) or “literature,” that is, how events, persons, and institutions are described by authors – historians – who wrote about the past of Israel in differing times and circumstances, as well as according to various methods. Furthermore, the volume differentiates between various genres of biblical and nonbiblical literature. After all, historiography, narrative, or poetry must be read from different viewpoints, and should be given dissimilar weights of historicity.

This volume utilizes the contributions of classical Jewish and Christian exegesis, without neglecting the results of modern critical biblical research. The intention is to deepen and enrich our knowledge and understanding of the works and methods of ancient Israelite historians, to explore the diverse portraits of King Solomon in the biblical historiographies, and whenever possible to compare these with biblical or non-biblical sources and findings.

IV. OUTLINE

This volume comprises two major parts: Part One, “Introduction, Sources, and Historical Background” (Chapters One to Four) establishes the research context in which the study will proceed, while the heart of the volume is presented in Part Two, “Solomon’s Birth, Rise, and Temple Building: Literary and Historiographical Observations” (Chapters Five to Thirteen). Finally Chapter Fourteen, “Writing and Rewriting the Story of Solomon,” offers a summary and synthesis of the entire study, and presents “The Man and the Myth: Solomon in History and Historiography.”

Because the material about Solomon in Samuel-Kings and Chronicles is directly parallel only at certain points in his life, it is not always possible to conduct a meticulous comparison, as is done concerning Solomon’s rise to kingship, coronation, and founding of the Temple in Chapters Ten, Eleven, and Thirteen. Regarding the circumstances of Solomon’s birth

¹⁹ For a discussion of this issue and reference to Ranke, see I. Kalimi, “Placing the Chronicler in His Own Historical Context: A Closer Examination,” *JNES* 68 (2009), pp. 179–192, esp. p. 185.

and the intrigues surrounding his succession, Chronicles omits virtually all of what is in 2 Samuel 11–12 and 1 Kings 1–2, so we must broaden our scope and compare the text in Samuel-Kings with more distant typological parallels in the Hebrew Bible and in extrabiblical Jewish writings (especially [Chapters Five, Seven, and Twelve](#)) and the ancient Near East (especially [Chapter Six](#)).

Likewise, though the primary purpose of this book is to analyze the portrayals of Solomon in the Hebrew Bible from *literary* viewpoints, a proper understanding of the compositional methods of the early biblical historiographers in particular cannot ignore the question of Solomon's historicity. Therefore, [Chapter Two](#), "Sources: Epigraphical, Archaeological, and Biblical," discusses the unavailability of direct epigraphical data, and possible archaeological and literary evidence regarding Solomon and his period. It shows that the account in Samuel-Kings offers the only surviving early sources for reconstructing the broad outlines of Solomon's life and reign, and there is no compelling reason to reject *a priori* the basic reliability of that outline, although it should be carefully examined, as spelled out earlier.

[Chapter Three](#), "Challenging Recent Dismissals of the United Monarchy," presents and challenges especially the recent minimalist / revisionist / nihilist approaches to ancient Israelite history in general and the United Monarchy in particular, without falling to the other extreme of naively accepting whatever the biblical texts affirm without question. Instead, [Chapter Four](#), "Solomon's Kingdom: Historical Evaluation and Case Studies," provides a historical evaluation of the various sources and four specific case studies. It advocates a balanced approach to the historical reliability of the biblical texts regarding Solomon (and his father, David), in light of all available sources, literary, epigraphical, and archaeological. This is exemplified through discussions of the historicity of Solomon's Temple, the size of Jerusalem under David and Solomon, the nature of their kingdom, and Solomon's harem.

[Chapter Five](#), "Solomon's Birth Story and Its Setting in 2 Samuel 10–12: Redaction History versus Compositional Unity," is an inner-biblical investigation of Solomon's birth story (or announcement, report) in 2 Samuel 12:24–25 within the composition and structure of 2 Samuel 10–12. This chapter reexamines some early and recent redaction-critical approaches, which claim that 2 Samuel 10–12 is the product of a lengthy editorial process, and suggests that a close reading of the text instead reveals its compositional unity.

Chapter Six, “Love of God and Apologia for a King: Solomon as the Lord’s Beloved King in Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Contexts,” compares Solomon’s additional theophoric name “Yedidyah (/Jedidiah)” and the statement that “the Lord loved him” in 2 Samuel 12:24–25 with parallels in the Hebrew Bible as well as in ancient Mesopotamian, Anatolian, Egyptian, and Persian writings. It argues that these statements in 2 Samuel serve as a form of royal legitimation often employed by usurpers across the ancient Near East. Thus, the name “Yedidyah” and the affirmation of the Lord’s love are part and parcel of Solomon’s Succession Narrative (which climaxes in 1 Kgs 1–2), which undermines scholarly dismissals of the text as a strange fragment unrelated to its context.

By contrast, the later biblical historiography has no interest in justifying Solomon’s usurpation of the throne, and uses accounts of Solomon’s birth and names for other purposes. **Chapter Seven**, “Solomon’s Birth and Names in Second Temple Period Literature,” considers Solomon’s introduction in Chronicles, where the name “Yedidyah” is not mentioned, and Solomon’s birth is stripped of any negative elements. The name “Yedidyah” also goes unmentioned in the *Testament of Solomon*, and in Josephus’ historical writings, as well as in the *Wisdom of Solomon* (though the latter does not mention any other proper names either), but it is alluded to in the books of Psalms and Nehemiah. The chapter also examines the wordplays on the names Shlomoh and Yedidyah in *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, and considers the question whether “Qohelet” was a third name for King Solomon.

Chapter Eight, “Solomon’s Pre-Monarchic Life in Biblical Historiography,” bridges the gap between the presentation of Solomon’s birth in 2 Samuel 12, and his succession in 1 Kings 1–2. It explores his pre-monarchic life, in the time from his birth until his succession to the throne, while reconsidering whether Nathan was appointed as Solomon’s guardian, and what might be inferred regarding Solomon’s age and marital status at the time of his succession to the throne.

Chapter Nine, “Solomon’s Physical Appearance and Leadership in Biblical Historiography,” considers the lack of any mention of the physical appearance of the king, in light of the physical descriptions in Samuel-Kings of earlier Israelite kings, and some of Solomon’s brothers, as well as some women in the royal court. It suggests that the omission of any indication of Solomon’s appearance could be intended to emphasize Solomon’s leadership and exceptional wisdom as his defining characteristics and qualifications for kingship.

Chapter Ten, “Solomon’s Succession to the Throne: History and Contrasting Historiographies,” returns to the detailed comparison between the accounts of Solomon in the early and late biblical historiographies. Following a presentation of what might be reconstructed concerning Solomon’s succession in history, the chapter shows that the biblical stories about Solomon’s rise differ significantly in narrative style, historical context and trustworthiness, and theological implications. According to the book of Kings, Solomon rose to the kingship as a result of power struggles and intrigues in the palace during the last days of the aged, ill, and weak David, who was manipulated by his wife Bathsheba and Nathan the prophet; but the book casts all of this as the fulfillment of the Lord’s will (e.g., 2 Sam 12:25; 1 Kgs 2:15). In Chronicles, Solomon’s succession is also presented as God’s will, but nearly all the elements that cast a negative light on David, Bathsheba, Nathan, and Solomon (2 Sam 11–12; 1 Kgs 1–2) are omitted, while Solomon is presented as the rightful king and the builder of the Temple: He was chosen not only by his father David, but also by the Lord, already in his mother’s womb. All Solomon’s brothers and the officials of the Israelite monarchy gladly reinforced his accession to the throne.

Chapter Eleven discusses “The Coronation of Solomon, David’s Testament and Its Implementation” in Kings and its counteraccount in Chronicles. The chapter shows that both accounts legitimize Solomon’s actions by attributing a Testament to David in which he charges his son to carry out the tasks that Solomon achieves at the beginning of his reign. Whereas in Kings the Testament includes both religious and political instructions, in Chronicles David focuses exclusively on Solomon’s religious duties and construction of the Temple. In Chronicles Solomon’s kingship symbolizes the combination of theocracy and monarchy, as he is God’s representative on earth, and the king and representative of the people before God. In contrast to his father, Solomon was prepared for and qualified to build the Temple because he was not stained with blood or sin. This affirmation flatly contradicts the account of Solomon’s violent elimination of his potential rivals in 1 Kings 2, which explains the omission of the latter from the Chronicler’s account.

Chapter Twelve, “Why Is the City in an Uproar?": Solomon’s Coronation Story in Its Biblical Context,” takes a detail from the story of the coronation of Solomon in 1 Kings 1:38–41 and compares it with similar motifs in the early and late literary and historical writings of the Hebrew Bible. The hasty coronation of Solomon packs a tremendous amount of drama into a short story, which is illustrated by the sounds of the people

and music carrying across the city and being heard by his rivals. This is one of several cases in biblical literature where the sounds of loud musical instruments and/or emotional human voices being heard elsewhere is used as a literary tool to transfer the audience from one place or group of people to another. This device appears to be used not only as a technical literary device, but also as a significant motif that recurs at a number of important turning points in Israelite history. Its use in 1 Kings 1, but not in Chronicles' account of Solomon's coronation, further reflects the contrasting portrayals of the nature of Solomon's ascension in these two books.

The Temple building and its divine approval are considered the greatest achievements of King Solomon in both biblical historiographies, but in Chronicles it became even greater. [Chapter Thirteen](#), "Solomon's Temple Building and Its Divine Approval in the Early and Late Biblical Historiographies," explores this most central issue in the Solomonic story in both Samuel-Kings and Chronicles, and emphasizes that overall the latter differs substantially from the former in many details. In particular, the Chronicler integrates into his description of Solomon's Temple elements from the Second Temple of his own day – i.e., Zerubbabel's Temple – and from the descriptions in the Torah of Moses' Tabernacle. By doing so, the Chronicler attempts to bestow on it signs of antiquity and holiness, which started in the time of Moses, and continued both in Solomon's Temple and in the Chronicler's contemporary Temple. Thus he formulates a different Temple of Solomon, one that never actually existed in Israelite history.

Finally, [Chapter Fourteen](#), "Writing and Rewriting the Story of Solomon," summarizes and synthesizes the outcomes of both parts of this investigation, and draws out some conclusions regarding the reconstruction of the history and culture of ancient Israel based on biblical and extrabiblical sources, as well as the sharply contrasting portraits of Solomon in the biblical historical writings.

All in all, the volume reveals the many faces of King Solomon, particularly as they are constructed and reconstructed in the early and late Israelite historical writings. As a result, it underlines the continuities and discontinuities between the writing methods and techniques, and historical and theological approaches of these distinct histories in their own temporal settings. It does this both by examining the portrayals of aspects of Solomon's story in each of these historiographical works on their own (especially in [Chapters Four to Nine](#)), and by directly comparing their portrayals regarding the portions of Solomon's life that both

recount (especially in [Chapters Ten to Thirteen](#)). It draws together various insights into the portrayals of Solomon and the relation between Samuel-Kings and Chronicles, while highlighting a number of elements that have previously gone unnoticed in the scholarship, by focusing deeply on the contrasting accounts of Solomon's birth, rise, and charge to build the Temple.

CHAPTER 2

Sources

Epigraphical, Archaeological, and Biblical

This chapter reviews the sources regarding King Solomon and his era, discusses the lack of direct epigraphical evidence and the presumed causes of this situation, and offers a critical survey of the available archaeological and literary sources, including biblical historiographic texts and some other biblical texts that could be related to Solomon. The next two chapters consider the implications of this material for the possibility of reconstructing Solomon's period in general.

I. AVAILABILITY OF EPIGRAPHICAL EVIDENCE

While several other Israelite and Judahite kings who are described in the Bible are also mentioned in ancient nonbiblical sources – including David, Omri, Ahab, Jehoram, Jehu, Menachem, Hezekiah, Manasseh, and Jechoniah (Jehoiachin) – Solomon receives more attention in the biblical texts than any later king. Yet there is no direct or indirect reference to him in any surviving contemporaneous extrabiblical source. As of today, no inscription or epigraphic source from or about Solomon has been found in the Land of Israel,¹ nor in any other ancient Near Eastern lands.

¹ The term ארץ ישראל (*Eretz-Yisra'el*, that is, the “Land of Israel”) is a biblical expression used to define the Israelite/Jewish Homeland in the Middle East (cf. Josh 11:22 [ארץ בני ישראל]; 1 Sam 13:19; 2 Kgs 5:2, 4; 6:23; Ezek 27:17; 40:2; 47:18; 1 Chr 22:2; 2 Chr 2:16; 30:25; 34:7). It is equivalent to the terms “Holy Land” or “Promised Land,” and has been used throughout Jewish history for thousands of years. The usage of the term “Palestine” by some scholars – mainly Christians and Muslims – will not be followed here, because it is both anachronistic to the biblical period, and also is a continuation and reification of the Roman attempt to erase the name of the Jews from their

Indeed, very few inscriptions of any kind have been found in the Land of Israel that can be dated to the eleventh or tenth centuries BCE, and most of these provide little more than isolated names.² The only real exceptions are the Gezer Calendar and the Khirbet Qeiyafa Ostrakon, neither of which offers any reference to the political situation at the time.³ This should not, however, be taken as proof that Solomon did not exist, because arguments from silence, based on a lack of epigraphical data, carry very limited weight, particularly in regions and cities (e.g., Jerusalem) that have been built, ruined, and rebuilt numerous times over several millennia.⁴ This is especially the case for David and Solomon,

own homeland, first employed by Caesar Hadrian after the failure of the Bar-Kochba revolt against Rome (135 CE). Though some earlier Greek and Hellenistic historians had already used the term *Παλαιστίνη*, for them it referred only to the former Philistine territories (the Pentapolis; פלשתי [e.g., Isa 14:29, 31] or ארץ פלשתים [1 Sam 27:1; 29:11; 31:9]; or the Assyrian *Palastu / Pilišta / Pilište*) on the southern coast of the land; see, for example, Herodotus, *Historia* 1.105; 2.104, 106; 3.91; 4.39. For further references and bibliography, see also M. Noth, "Zur Geschichte des Namens Palästina," *ZDPV* 62 (1939), pp. 125–144, esp. pp. 134–135; M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1976), vol. 1, pp. 3, 7. Some scholars use the name "Palestine" with clear political intent, for instance, K. M. Whitlam, *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History* (London: Routledge, 1996); see also Chapter Three, note 39.

² See the summary with bibliography by A. Lemaire, "Levantine Literacy ca. 1000/750 BCE," in B. B. Schmidt (ed.), *Contextualizing Israel's Sacred Writings: Ancient Literacy, Orality, and Literary Production*, *Ancient Israel and Its Literature* 22 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), pp. 11–45, esp. pp. 15–23, 33.

³ On the Khirbet Qeiyafa Ostrakon, see, for example, H. Misgav, Y. Garfinkel, and S. Ganor, "The Ostrakon," A. Yardeni, "Further Observations on the Ostrakon," and G. Bearman and W. A. Christen-Barry, "Imaging the Ostrakon," in Y. Garfinkel and S. Ganor (eds.), *Khirbet Qeiyafa Volume 1: Excavation Report 2007–2008* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2009), pp. 243–257, 259–260, 261–270; C. Rollston, "The Khirbet Qeiyafa Ostrakon: Methodological Musings and Caveats," *Tel Aviv* 38 (2011), pp. 67–82; Y. Garfinkel, I. Kreimerman, and P. Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa: A Fortified City in Judah from the Time of King David* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2016), esp. pp. 157–172, with references to the earlier literature. For a summary of the scattered epigraphic evidence from the eleventh to the tenth century BCE, with bibliography, see A. R. Millard, "The Ostrakon from the Days of David Found at Khirbet Qeiyafa," *TynBul* 62 (2011), pp. 1–13, esp. pp. 1–2.

⁴ Additionally, as some biblical texts recount and extrabiblical materials show, the Israelites appear to have often written on papyrus, which does not survive for long outside of desert regions. Although these texts and materials are from relatively later periods, they can perhaps attest to the continuity of an earlier custom. On this issue, see for example, the story in Jeremiah 36; and cf. A. R. Millard, "An Assessment of the Evidence for Writing in Ancient Israel," *Biblical Archaeology Today: Proceedings of the International Congress on Biblical Archaeology, Jerusalem, April 1984* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1985), pp. 301–312, esp. pp. 303–305; idem, "Texts and Archaeology: Weighing the

because they reigned during a period of relative weakness among Israel's neighbors (near and far), who left few epigraphic traces at all. Among Israel and Judah's immediate neighbors in the Levant, no inscriptions referring to international events in the tenth century BCE have survived, while the surviving Egyptian and Mesopotamian records from the first three quarters of the that century contain little reference to foreign affairs at all, much less to Canaan / the Land of Israel, and so they can hardly be expected to refer to David or Solomon.⁵ Therefore, it is not the case that we have accounts of the Levant from the tenth century BCE that do not mention David and Solomon, but rather that we lack any contemporary extrabiblical accounts of this period to confirm *or* deny their existence. Simply put, there were no Egyptian, Mesopotamian, or Anatolian campaigns to the Land of Israel, Syria, or Phoenician coastal city-states during the entire period of the United Monarchy, and therefore also no reports on the rulers of these or other kingdoms.⁶

The only potential exception is the inscriptions of Pharaoh Shishak I (i.e., Shoshenq or Sheshonq, 931–910 BCE or 945–924 BCE) of the Twenty-Second Dynasty. In the temple of Amon at Karnak (Egypt), an inscription lists the towns that Shishak captured in his campaign to Canaan. Moreover, a fragment of a stele mentioning Shishak was also found at Megiddo, though unfortunately its original stratigraphic location is unknown.⁷ For this reason, and the general uncertainties regarding the chronology of the Third Intermediate Period in Egypt, the dating of Shishak's campaign cannot be independently verified, but according to 1 Kings

Evidence – The Case for King Solomon,” *PEQ* 123 (1991), pp. 19–27, esp. p. 25; C. A. Rollston, *Writing and Literacy in the World of Ancient Israel: Epigraphic Evidence from the Iron Age*, Archaeology and Biblical Studies 11 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), esp. pp. 74–79, who also lists additional bibliography.

⁵ This is emphasized by P. James, “Kings of Jerusalem at the Late Bronze to Iron Age Transition: Forerunners or Doubles of David and Solomon?” in P. James and P. G. van der Veen (eds.), *Solomon and Shishak: Current Perspectives from Archaeology, Epigraphy, History and Chronology, Proceedings of the Third BICANE Colloquium held at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge 26–27 March, 2011*, BAR International Series 2732 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2015), pp. 236–257, esp. pp. 236–240, with references to the primary literature. James, however, goes on to make the bizarre and undocumented suggestion that the real Solomon was actually a local ruler who served as an Egyptian viceroy under Merneptah or his son Seti II (though this requires a revision of both Egyptian and Levantine chronology by two and a half centuries!).

⁶ On the geopolitical situation in the ancient Near East at the end of the eleventh and in the tenth centuries BCE, see the discussion in [Chapter Four, §II, 3](#).

⁷ It was found in the discard pile of the nineteenth-century excavation by Gottlieb Schumacher; see Y. Yadin, “Did Pharaoh Sheshonq Attack Jerusalem?” *BAR* (July/Aug 2012), pp. 42–52, 66, esp. pp. 48–49, 52.

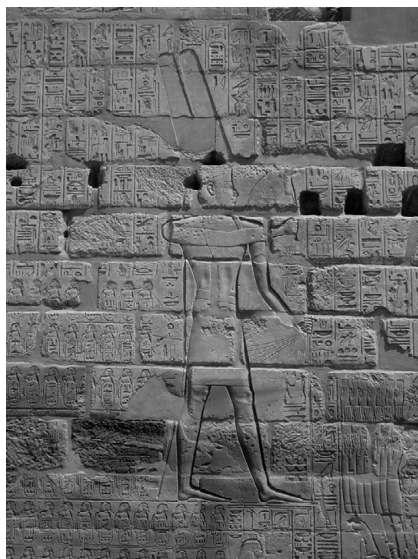


Figure 2 Shishak Inscription at Karnak. Image by Olaf Tausch (2009).

14:25–28, it occurred in the fifth year of Rehoboam’s reign (925 BCE). If that is correct, these two Shishak inscriptions give us the only surviving epigraphic evidence regarding the geopolitical situation in the region during the last quarter of the tenth century BCE, and even they list only the places visited, not the rulers or kingdoms to which these places belonged.⁸

Thus, as Nadav Na’aman states:

Detailed accounts of first millennium intra-state events appear for the first time in the ninth century BCE. All Syro-Palestinian inscriptions of the tenth century refer to local affairs and shed no light on international affairs. Even if David and Solomon accomplished the deeds attributed to them in the Bible, no source would have mentioned their names. The silence of tenth-century sources neither proves nor disproves the biblical account of the United Monarchy.⁹

⁸ On Shishak’s campaign and inscriptions, see for example, B. Mazar, “Shishak’s campaign to the Land of Israel,” *Canaan and Israel: Historical Essays* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute and Israel Exploration Society, 1974), pp. 234–244; K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2003), pp. 32–34; idem, *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt (1100–650 B.C.)*, 2nd ed. (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1995), pp. 293–300, §§252–258.

⁹ N. Na’aman, “Sources and Composition in the History of David,” in V. Fritz and P. R. Davies (eds.), *The Origins of the Ancient Israelite States*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 228 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), pp. 170–186, esp. p. 170. As Na’aman himself notes, this challenges the assertions of G. Garbini, *History and Ideology*

Also, Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, who are skeptical of the biblical accounts of David and Solomon,¹⁰ acknowledge that “the absence of outside references to David and Solomon in ancient inscriptions is completely understandable, since the era in which they were believed to have ruled (c. 1005–c. 930 BCE) was a period in which the great empires of Egypt and Mesopotamia were in decline.”¹¹

Nevertheless, one cannot exclude the possibility that some contemporary references to Solomon may yet survive, since new finds have been and could still continue to be uncovered. For example, the enigmatic ostrakon from Khirbet Qeiyafa (no matter what exactly it concerns) was only discovered in 2008. Still more significantly, the Tel Dan inscription was first discovered in 1993 (Fragment A) and 1994 (Fragments B1 and B2).¹² Fragment A, line 9 mentions *bytdwd*, and the vast majority of scholars have concluded that *dwd* here refers to the biblical David, as the founder of the Davidic Dynasty, so that *bytdwd* means either the “Dominion of David” or the “House [i.e., Dynasty] of David.”¹³ Thus it is similar to *Bt*

in *Ancient Israel*, trans. J. Bowden (New York: Crossroad, 1988), p. 16, and E. A. Knauf, “King Solomon’s Copper Supply,” in E. Lipiński (ed.), *Phoenicia and the Bible*, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 44 (Leuven: Peeters, 1991), pp. 167–186, esp. pp. 171–172.

¹⁰ See Chapter Three, §III–IV.

¹¹ I. Finkelstein and N. A. Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology’s New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts* (New York: Free Press, 2001), pp. 128–129.

¹² See A. Biran and J. Naveh, “An Aramaic Stele Fragment from Tel Dan,” *IEJ* 43 (1993), pp. 81–98; idem, “The Tel Dan Inscription: A New Fragment,” *IEJ* 45 (1995), pp. 1–18.

¹³ See the detailed survey and full bibliographical references by H. Hagelia, *The Dan Debate: The Tel Dan Inscription in Recent Research*, *Recent Research in Biblical Studies* 4 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2009), pp. 44–56. Hagelia concludes (p. 72): “After all this debate, it seems probable that *bytdwd* should be read as *byt dwd*, and that it should refer to ‘House of David’ as a dynastic designation with reference to Southern Kingdom of Judah ... this interpretation is followed by most scholars engaged in the debate.” See also his previous book, H. Hagelia, *The Tel Dan Inscription: A Critical Investigation of Recent Research on its Palaeography and Philology*, *Studia Semitica Upsaliensia* 22 (Uppsala: Uppsala University Library, 2006); and recently C. Frevel, *Geschichte Israels*, *Studienbücher Theologie* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2016), p. 110. Some scholars have attempted to explain *bytdwd* as a toponym, or claimed that *byt* is the Temple in Jerusalem or some other local sanctuary, and that *dwd* is an epithet for the God of Israel or another deity. However, all these suggestions should be rejected; see in detail Hagelia, *The Dan Debate*, pp. 56–69. Moreover, some scholars, such as A. Lemaire (“‘House of David’ Restored in Moabite Inscription,” *BAR* 20, 3 [1994], pp. 30–37) and M. Weippert (*Historisches Textbuch zum Alten Testament*, *Grundrisse zum Alten Testament* 10 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010], no. 105, p. 248), claim that line 31 of the Mesha Inscription also refers to *bt* [i.e., *Dwd*] (House of David). However, this reading is controversial.



Figure 3 Tel Dan Inscription. Image by Oren Rozen (2016).

Ḥumrî (“House of Omri”), which refers to the kingdom of Israel in some Assyrian royal inscriptions.¹⁴

II. ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS

In the absence of direct epigraphic documentation, the other archaeological materials that could be related to the reign of Solomon are crucial. However, the findings are open to interpretation and have been sharply

¹⁴ For detailed references to the original texts and discussion, see M. Weippert, “Jau(a) Mār Ḥumrî: Joram oder Jehu von Israel?” *VT* 28 (1978), pp. 113–118. Although we do not (yet) have direct epigraphical data from or about King Solomon, there is an extrabiblical source that may be relevant, though unfortunately it comes to us thirdhand: In *Against Apion* 1.118–120, Josephus Flavius cites evidence for Judean antiquity from various non-Jewish historians, such as Manetho, Berosus, and Menander. The latter reports: “During his [i.e., Eiiromos i.e., Hiram] reign there [in Tyre] lived Abdemounos, a young boy, who always mastered [or, solved] the problems [i.e., riddles] which *Solomon, the king of Hierosolyma*, used to set.” Thus, if indeed Menander based this information on ancient Tyrian annals from the time of Hiram and Solomon, as Josephus claims, then this would provide a testimony to Solomon and his wisdom from a nonbiblical contemporary source. Josephus also cites a reference to Solomon from Dios, “a man trusted for his accuracy in Phoenician history” (*Against Apion* 1.112–115; Barclay, *Against Apion*, pp. 70–72). See J. M. Barclay, *Against Apion: Translation and Commentary*, ed. S. Mason (Leiden and Boston: E. J. Brill, 2007), pp. 73–74; cf. H. St. J. Thackeray, *Josephus with an English Translation*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926), vol. 1, pp. 210–211; see also W. Zwickel, “Die tyrische Königsliste und die Annalenangaben des Alten Testaments,” in J. M. Robker et al. (eds.), *Text – Textgeschichte – Textwirkung: Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von Siegfried Kreuzer*, *Alter Orient und Altes Testament* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2014), pp. 83–92, esp. pp. 91–92.

disputed among archaeologists in recent decades, even regarding fundamental questions as to their dates. Thus, for example, to whom should be attributed and to which period should be dated the monumental findings – particularly the cities' gates – at the important strategic cities of Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer: to Solomon's time in the mid-tenth century BCE, as stated in 1 Kings 9:15 and 9:17 (according to the "High Chronology"), or to the Omride dynasty of Israel in the first half of the ninth century BCE (the "Low Chronology")? The latter view is defended by Finkelstein, Silberman, and others, who argue that the Iron Age constructions in these cities were no earlier than the ninth century, and doubt the biblical accounts of Solomon's empire.¹⁵ In contrast, Amihai Mazar and others argue that the excavations of these sites provide evidence of monumental construction during Solomon's time.¹⁶

The debate is highly complex: Archaeologists cannot even agree regarding the basic terminology when referring to various archaeological / historical periods. In particular, the dating of the period referred to as Iron IIA varies dramatically from one archaeologist to another, even among those who uphold the conventional model. For example, among mainstream archaeologists, Ernest Wright (1961) identified Iron IIA as 900–800 BCE (while identifying the United Monarchy as Iron IC, 1000–918 BCE); Yohanan Aharoni and Ruth Amiran (1958) first referred to 1000–840 BCE as "Israelite II"; but later Aharoni (1982), as well as Larry G. Herr (1997), Zeev Herzog (1997), and Amihai Mazar (1990) defined Iron IIA as 1000–925 BCE; Gabriel Barkay (1992) and Amnon Ben-Tor (1992) define Iron IIA as 1000–800 BCE, and currently Amihai Mazar (2005) assigns it to ca. 980–ca. 840/830 BCE.¹⁷ Meanwhile, Finkelstein and his followers claim that the Iron IIA period began

¹⁵ See Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, pp. 169–201; idem, *David and Solomon*; I. Finkelstein, "King Solomon's Golden Age: History or Myth?" in I. Finkelstein and A. Mazar, *The Quest for the Historical Israel: Debating Archaeology and the History of Early Israel*, ed. B. Schmidt (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), pp. 107–116.

¹⁶ See A. Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, 10,000–586 B. C. E.*, The Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1990), pp. 375–402; idem, "The Search for David and Solomon: An Archaeological Perspective," in I. Finkelstein and A. Mazar, *The Quest for the Historical Israel: Debating Archaeology and the History of Israel*, ed. B. Schmidt (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), pp. 117–139.

¹⁷ For details, see A. Mazar, "The Debate over the Chronology of the Iron Age in the Southern Levant," in T. E. Levy and T. Higham (eds.), *The Bible and Radiocarbon Dating: Archaeology, Text and Science* (London: Equinox, 2005), pp. 15–30, esp. pp. 15–17.

only *after* Solomon, in the late tenth or early ninth century BCE¹⁸ Thus, in contemporary scholarship the dispute is not about the archaeological period – Iron IIA – but rather about fixing its exact time in the chronology of the monarchic period.

These differences reflect more than just a terminological dispute, however, as the period referred to as Iron IIA is associated with monumental architecture found at a variety of sites in the Land of Israel, including Hazor, Megiddo, Gezer, and Jerusalem, the construction of which is conceivable only under a strong, centralized state. Thus Amihai Mazar and most Israeli and American archaeologists who uphold the High Chronology believe that monumental construction began after David's conquests around 1000 BCE (even though these scholars differ dramatically on when they think the Iron IIA period ended), while Finkelstein and his followers, who defend the Low Chronology, think the period of monumental architecture began only after the invasion of the Egyptian Pharaoh Shishak, generally dated to 925 BCE (that is, five years after Solomon's time), and therefore must derive from the period of the divided kingdoms.

Arguments for and against these two positions have been based on a range of different types of archaeological evidence, including the distribution of particular types of pottery at various sites, and most recently, radiocarbon (¹⁴C) dating of seeds found in the destruction layers. Unfortunately, all of these types of evidence are ambiguous and require interpretation, so the debate continues. For example, the remains of a distinctive six-chambered gate system were found at Hazor, Gezer, and Megiddo. Partially based on 1 Kings 9:15, Yigael Yadin – who led the excavation of Megiddo between 1960 and 1971 – argued that all three should be dated to the Solomonic period, while Finkelstein and his followers argue that they must postdate Solomon's time.¹⁹

¹⁸ In his initial article on "The Archaeology of the United Monarchy: An Alternative View" (*Levant* 28 [1996], pp. 177–187), I. Finkelstein concluded that "the line between the Iron I and the Iron II, characterized by the appearance of monumental building activity, growing evidence for writing, a shift to mass production of pottery, and a growing wave of settlement in the highlands, should be put in the early ninth century rather than c. 1000 B. C. E" (*ibid.*, p. 185). However, more recently he has moved closer to the conventional view; see, for example, *idem*, "A Low Chronology Update: Archaeology, History and Bible," in T. E. Levy and T. Higham (eds.), *The Bible and Radiocarbon Dating: Archaeology, Text and Science* (London: Equinox, 2005), pp. 31–42, esp. p. 39: "the late Iron I/early Iron IIA transition [is] fixed in the late 10th century B. C. E."

¹⁹ For a brief summary of the debate, Yadin's view, and the more recent discussion, see Mazar, "The Debate over the Chronology of the Iron Age," pp. 15–30, esp. pp. 17–18.

At Hazor, the last Canaanite city was apparently destroyed in the thirteenth century BCE, and the site was only resettled a couple of centuries later on a limited scale (Strata XII/XI), while the first significant Iron Age fortifications, including the six-chambered gate, come after this (Stratum X). The most recent lead excavator at Hazor, Amnon Ben-Tor, concludes that Strata XII/XI represent the first Israelite settlements at the site and should be dated to the late eleventh and early tenth centuries BCE, and agrees with Yadin that Stratum X, with its city gate, derives from the second half of the tenth century, that is, during Solomon's reign.²⁰

Similarly, at Gezer, the city gate and related structures appear in Stratum VIII, regarding which the excavator William G. Dever concludes:

This stratum spanning the mid- to late tenth century B. C. E., sees major changes, especially in Fields II and III. In Field III, Macalister's 'Maccabean Castle' was re-excavated; Yigael Yadin had already interpreted it, sight unseen, as a four-entryway [i.e., six-chambered] city gate and stretch of casemate wall, like those at Hazor and Megiddo. He cited the reference in 1 Kings 9:15–17 to Solomonic defenses at all three sites. Yadin turned out to be correct, the Gezer date confirmed by red-slipped and hand-burnished pottery in the deep constructional fills underlying the walls and first roadway.²¹

Indeed, elsewhere Dever summarizes the results of various excavations and concludes: "If we had never heard of a 'Solomon' in the biblical texts, we should have to invent a 10th century B. C. E. Israelite king by another name."²² The most recent excavations at Gezer have been led by Steven Ortiz and Samuel Wolff, who also date the wall and gate system to the tenth century BCE, and conclude that "This building activity probably corresponds to the biblical tradition of Solomon fortifying Gezer, at least

²⁰ See A. Ben-Tor, *Hazor: Canaanite Metropolis, Israelite City* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society and Biblical Archaeology Society, 2016), esp. pp. 19–20, 126–146; A. Ben-Tor, D. Ben-Ami, and D. Sandhaus, *Hazor VI: The 1990–2009 Excavations. The Iron Age* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2012), esp. pp. 1–3, 52–153.

²¹ See W. G. Dever, "Gezer," in E. M. Meyers (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), vol. 2, pp. 396–400, esp. p. 399; cf. also idem, "Gezer," in E. Stern, A. Lewison-Gilboa, and J. Aviram (eds.), *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society / New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), vol. 2, pp. 496–506, esp. pp. 504–505.

²² See W. G. Dever, "Archaeology and the 'Age of Solomon': A Case Study in Archaeology and Historiography," in L. K. Handy (ed.), *The Age of Solomon: Scholarship at the Turn of the Millennium*, Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East 11 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), pp. 217–251, esp. p. 251.

to a period where Judah was able to expand westward or down the foothills to the edge of the coastal plain.”²³

Likewise, Yadin concluded from his excavations at Megiddo that Stratum VB should be identified as the first Israelite settlement, Stratum VA/IVB should be dated to David’s reign, and IVA (including the six-chamber gate) should be dated to Solomon’s.²⁴ Thus, Yadin dated city wall 325 and “Solomon’s stables” to the tenth century BCE.²⁵ By contrast, however, Finkelstein has led the excavations of Megiddo since 1990, and has argued that the monumental remains from Iron IIA, found in Strata VA/IVB and IVA (including the city gate), should be dated to the period after 920 BCE, and therefore that the similar constructions at Hazor and Gezer also likely postdate Solomon.²⁶ Thus, he concludes, “This means that David and Solomon ruled over a limited territory in the southern highlands rather than a vast empire which included these cities. It also means that the monuments previously assigned to the time of King Solomon were built almost a century after his time, in the days of the Omride dynasty of the Northern Kingdom.”²⁷

Regarding Jerusalem, Eilat Mazar, following the work of her grandfather Benjamin Mazar, claims that the remains of a wall and gatehouse structure unearthed in Jerusalem, in the north of the City of David, should also be attributed to Solomon.²⁸ Moreover, based on “architectural remains, and supported by the corresponding pottery and other small

²³ S. Ortiz and S. Wolff, “Guarding the Border to Jerusalem: The Iron Age City of Gezer,” *NEA* 75 (2012), pp. 4–19, esp. pp. 16, 18.

²⁴ See the summary of Yadin’s view by D. Ussishkin, “Megiddo,” in E. M. Meyers (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), vol. 3, pp. 460–469, esp. pp. 464–465; following Y. Aharoni, *The Archaeology of the Land of Israel*, trans. A. F. Rainey (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982), pp. 195–212; cf. K. M. Kenyon, “Megiddo, Hazor, Samaria, and Chronology,” *Bulletin of the Institute of Archaeology* 4 (1964), pp. 143–155; G. J. Wightman, “Megiddo VIA-III: Associated Structures and Chronology,” *Levant* 17 (1985), pp. 117–129.

²⁵ Y. Yadin, “Megiddo of the Kings of Israel,” *BAR* 33 (1970), pp. 66–96.

²⁶ See, e.g., I. Finkelstein and E. Piasezky, “Radiocarbon Dating the Iron Age in the Levant: A Bayesian Model for Six Ceramic Phases and Six Transitions,” *Antiquity* 84 (2010), pp. 374–385, esp. p. 381.

²⁷ Finkelstein and Piasezky, “Radiocarbon Dating the Iron Age in the Levant,” p. 383.

²⁸ See E. Mazar, *Discovering the Solomonic Wall in Jerusalem: A Remarkable Archaeological Adventure* (Jerusalem: Shoham Academic Research and Publication, 2011), esp. pp. 144–150. See also, for instance, E. Mazar and B. Mazar, *Excavations in the South of the Temple Mount: The Ophel of Biblical Jerusalem*, Qedem: Monographs of the Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem 29 (Jerusalem: Keter, 1989), esp. pp. 58–60.

finds,” Eilat Mazar proposed “to identify the Large Stone Structure [in the City of David] as the palace built by King David. Though to date only a small part of the structure has been excavated, it seems highly probable that it was built as a palace-fortress.” In her opinion, “Shortly after, under Solomon, construction on the northern part of the Eastern Hill was resumed, the first structure built at that spot being none other than the Temple itself.”²⁹ However, there are again contrasting views regarding the possibility that these monumental structures date to the United Monarchy.³⁰ In any case, one must keep in mind that the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, certainly the most significant site for Solomon’s time, has never been properly excavated, and due to the present sensitive religious and political situation, it would most likely be impossible to excavate there.³¹ This renders any argument based on the absence of evidence dubious at best.

Until recently, such disputes over the dating and significance of particular archaeological sites revolved mostly around the interpretation of the specific styles of pottery found in each stratum of these various sites. Since pottery styles change over time, this offers a valuable means of establishing relative chronology and coordinating the layers at different locations, but it is inherently subjective and difficult to tie to specific absolute dates. Therefore, archaeologists have recently turned to radiocarbon dating, particularly of seeds preserved within the destruction layers at various sites, as a possible means to verify their reconstructions independently. Unfortunately, the results so far have also been mixed,

²⁹ See E. Mazar, “The Solomonic (Early Iron Age IIA) Royal Quarter of the Ophel,” *The Ophel Excavations to the South of the Temple Mount 2009–2013: Final Reports Volume I* (Jerusalem: Shoham Academic Research and Publication, 2015), pp. 459–474, esp. p. 460. For an extended discussion of the archaeological evidence concerning Jerusalem during the United Monarchy, see J. M. Cahill, “Jerusalem at the Time of the United Monarchy: The Archaeological Evidence,” in A. G. Vaughn and A. E. Killebrew (eds.), *Jerusalem in Bible and Archaeology: The First Temple Period*, Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series 18 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), pp. 13–80. See also Chapter Four, §II, 2.

³⁰ See A. G. Vaughn and A. E. Killebrew (eds.), *Jerusalem in Bible and Archaeology: The First Temple Period*, Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series 18 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), pp. 1–180; I. Finkelstein, L. Singer-Avitz, Z. Herzog, and D. Ussishkin, “Has King David’s Palace in Jerusalem Been Found?” *Tel Aviv* 34 (2007), pp. 142–164; and cf. A. Mazar, “Archaeology and the Biblical Narrative: The Case of the United Monarchy,” in R. G. Kratz and H. Spieckermann, *One God – One Cult – One Nation: Archaeological and Biblical Perspectives*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 405 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2010), pp. 29–58, esp. pp. 34–49.

³¹ See also Chapter Four, §II, 1, and the bibliography in Chapter Thirteen, §I, note 1.

and can be interpreted in various ways. For example, a recent study submitted seventy-eight samples from ten locations at Megiddo for radiocarbon dating, and concluded that the beginning of Iron IIA could be dated anywhere between 985 and 935 BCE, spanning the last part of David's reign and most of Solomon's.³²

Meanwhile, monumental Iron Age structures have now also been uncovered at Khirbet Qeiyafa, a large city located in the Elah Valley of Judah, and recent radiocarbon (¹⁴C) examinations of olive pits found at the site also suggest, according to Yosef Garfinkel, that "Khirbet Qeiyafa was most likely destroyed somewhere in the first third of the 10th century BC."³³ Since the city obviously had to have been built before it could be destroyed, and not just a day before, this places the founding of the city no later than the early tenth century BCE, that is, in the time of David.³⁴ Garfinkel stresses that

the ¹⁴C data from Khirbet Qeiyafa clearly indicate that the process of state formation and urbanization started in the kingdom of Judah as early as the late 11th century BC. Even if one hesitates to accept unequivocally the historicity of the golden age of the 'United Monarchy' as portrayed in the biblical narrative, it does appear that a kingdom was established at that time in Judah.³⁵

³² See M. B. Toffolo, E. Arie, M. A. S. Martin, E. Boaretto, and I. Finkelstein, "Absolute Chronology of Megiddo, Israel, in the Late Bronze and Iron Ages: High Resolution Radiocarbon Dating," *Radiocarbon* 56 (2014), pp. 221–244, esp. p. 241. An earlier study of a different, smaller set of olive pits from Megiddo also supported dating the transition to Iron IIA broadly to the first half of the tenth century; see A. Gilboa, I. Sharon, and E. Boaretto, "Radiocarbon Dating of the Iron Age Levels," in I. Finkelstein, D. Ussishkin, E. H. Cline et al. (eds.), *Megiddo V: The 2004–2008 Seasons*, Tel Aviv University Sonia and Marco Nadler Institute of Archaeology Monograph Series 31 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013), vol. 3, pp. 1117–1127.

³³ Two sets of olive pits were submitted for radiocarbon dating, the first set from individual pits found at various points in the destruction layer, the other set found in a single burned jar found in the destruction layer; see Y. Garfinkel, K. Streit, S. Ganor, and P. J. Reimer, "King David's City at Khirbet Qeiyafa: Results of the Second Radiocarbon Dating Project," *Radiocarbon* 57 (2015), pp. 881–890. Both tests confirmed a probable date-range for the destruction in the late eleventh to mid-tenth century BCE: The first study found with a 68.3% confidence level that the destruction took place between 1012 and 967 BCE (see *ibid.*, p. 883, with bibliography), and the second study determined with a 68.3% confidence level that the destruction took place between 1006 and 961 BCE, and with a 95.4% confidence level that it occurred between 1011 and 921 BCE (see *ibid.*, pp. 887–888).

³⁴ See Garfinkel, Streit, Ganor, and Reimer, "King David's City at Khirbet Qeiyafa," pp. 887–889.

³⁵ Garfinkel, Streit, Ganor, and Reimer, "King David's City at Khirbet Qeiyafa," p. 888. On the same page, the authors further indicate: "These results fit well with the recent ¹⁴C sequence and subsequent modeling of the Iron Age levels at Megiddo (Gilboa et al., 2013 [see note 32 herein]). A Bayesian model of the available data (after removal

Finally, it is also worth mentioning the copper mines in the Timna Valley (which Nelson Glueck referred to as “King Solomon’s Mines”).³⁶ Archaeological excavations in the last decade confirmed that copper smelting in Timna (and Faynan) reached its peak in the tenth century BCE (Iron Age II).³⁷ The material finds at these sites point to Edomite activity.³⁸ However, according to the biblical text, Edom was under Israelite control at least during most of the United Monarchic period (1 Sam 14:47; 2 Sam 8:11–14; 1 Kgs 9:26; 11:14–22).

All in all, neither traditional archaeological dating methods (usually based on pottery styles), nor the newer radiocarbon dates, offer a secure basis for proving or disproving the existence of Solomon or the extent of his kingdom, and they provide no *a priori* reason to doubt the biblical account of his reign. Nor should the lack of epigraphic attestation of Solomon be taken in and of itself as evidence against his existence. There are monumental finds at a variety of Iron IIA sites in Israel and Judah; the only question is whether they should be dated to the tenth or the ninth century, which means that if the earlier date is correct, they offer *potential* confirmation of Solomon’s building projects. So while the evidence does not yet allow certainty, it is entirely possible that future evidence or better methods may *perhaps* be able to resolve this dispute.

In the midst of such continuing disagreements among archaeologists regarding even basic questions of dating and terminology, it is nevertheless amazing how often archaeological evidence is invoked as “sure proof” for or against the historicity of Solomon. In fact, the archaeological evidence is no less ambiguous and open to interpretation than are the biblical texts themselves. Thus, neither archaeological nor textual sources of information can be accepted uncritically or given inherent superiority over the other; both must be sifted and weighed, and neither should be used to dismiss summarily the other’s basic historical value. Therefore, the texts need to be evaluated on their own terms, without allowing the still highly disputed archaeological evidence to distort our readings.

of outlying samples) calculates the transition of Iron IB to Iron IIA at Megiddo as 990–945 B. C. E. at 68.3% and 1000–925 at 95.4%. This, however, is based on only three Iron Age IIA samples.” See also Chapter Four, §II, 3.

³⁶ See N. Glueck, “The Copper Mines of King Solomon,” *The Other Side of the Jordan* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1954), pp. 58–85.

³⁷ See E. Ben-Yosef et al., “A New Chronological Framework for Iron Age Copper Production at Timna (Israel),” *BASOR* 367 (2012), pp. 31–71, esp. pp. 32–33, 65.

³⁸ See Ben-Yosef et al., “A New Chronological Framework for Iron Age Copper Production at Timna (Israel),” esp. pp. 64–65.

III. BIBLICAL SOURCES

In principle, the surviving extrabiblical sources can enrich our knowledge of some events mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, as well as others unmentioned in it, and clarify various aspects of culture, religion, politics, and everyday life. However, they cannot by themselves provide even a basic narrative of the main outlines (*die grosse Zügen*) of Israelite history.³⁹ No contemporaneous extrabiblical source offers any account of the political situation in Israel and Judah during the tenth century BCE, and as we have seen, the archaeological remains themselves cannot provide any unambiguous evidence of events. Even building activities that have left archaeological traces are open to interpretation, and no in situ discovery from the Land of Israel has provided direct epigraphic attestation of any tenth-century ruler or political entity of this part of the ancient Near East. The fragment of Shishak's stele at Megiddo might have been an exception, but unfortunately it was not discovered in situ. Accordingly, while the biblical historical texts are relatively limited in quantity, and occasionally problematic in quality, still they remain the only sources available for delineating the continuous development of the history of ancient Israel in general, and Solomon's era in particular. Almost all that one can say about King Solomon and his time is unavoidably based on the biblical texts. Nevertheless, here also one cannot always offer conclusive proof that a certain biblical passage reflects the actual historical situation in the tenth century BCE, beyond arguing that it is plausible to this or that degree. The material on Solomon is located in diverse sections of the Hebrew Bible, which mainly appear in three blocks.

1. *The Books of Samuel and Kings*

The first and the most important block of sources on Solomon is in the *early* biblical historiography, in Samuel-Kings, which is structured as follows:

- (a) The exposition and historical setting of Solomon's birth during David's war against the Ammonites and the Aramean coalition, and his adultery with Bathsheba, are recounted in 2 Samuel 10–12, as part of the "(Throne) Succession Narrative" (roughly 2 Sam

³⁹ See Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, p. 410; see also idem, "Placing the Chronicler in His Own Historical Context," pp. 179–192.

- 9–20 and 1 Kgs 1–2).⁴⁰ These circumstances brought Solomon’s mother, Bathsheba, to David’s palace, which led to Solomon’s birth and names (2 Sam 12:24–25).
- (b) The story of Solomon’s reign in 1 Kings 1–11, which begins with the last part of the Succession Narrative (roughly 1 Kgs 1–2),⁴¹ describes his rise to the throne and consolidation of power. Then, 1 Kings 3–11 combines various ancient sources and legendary stories, as well as historical evaluations and theological additions in the form of prayers and speeches.
- (c) To these major blocks should also be added the brief mention of Solomon in the list of David’s sons (2 Sam 5:13–16), and the reference to the destruction of Solomon’s foreign cultic sites in the story of Josiah’s reform almost 300 years later (2 Kgs 23:13–14; cf. 1 Kgs 11:7–8).

All of these appear in what has been called the “Deuteronomistic History,” which carries the Israelite history up until the Babylonian Exile, and ends with the release of Jehoiachin from prison by King Evil-Merodach of Babylon (561 BCE). Because this is the last event that is mentioned in the book (2 Kgs 25:27–30), and it does not refer to the important decree of Cyrus of Persia in 538 BCE (Ezra 1:1–3 // 2 Chr 36:22–23), the final edition of the Deuteronomistic History most likely reached its substantial form between these two events.⁴² However, the bulk of the material in these books appears to have been collected much earlier than that. Following the theory of Frank Moore Cross, which has been widely accepted (especially in North America and Israel),⁴³

⁴⁰ On the Throne Succession Narrative, which contains some of the finest dramatic storytelling in the Hebrew Bible, see [Chapter Ten, §III](#).

⁴¹ On the split between the books of Samuel and Kings in the Masoretic Text (i.e., MT) in contrast to that in the Septuagint, see [Chapter Ten, note 57](#).

⁴² The idea that Deuteronomy through Kings were compiled as a single composition was first presented by M. Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1957), pp. 12–18; English translation: idem, *The Deuteronomistic History*, 2nd ed., Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 15 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), pp. 13–26.

⁴³ For surveys of the current views, including European, see S. L. McKenzie, “Deuteronomistic History,” in D. N. Freedman (ed.), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), vol. 2, pp. 160–168; idem, “Deuteronomistic History,” in K. D. Sakenfeld (ed.), *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), vol. 2, pp. 106–108, esp. p. 107; M. Cogan, “1 and 2 Kings,” in M. D. Coogan (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Books of the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), vol. 1, pp. 537–556, esp. pp. 538–540. For my critical responses to several alternative reconstructions of the redaction history of Samuel-Kings

it appears that the Deuteronomistic History went through at least two redactions, at least one in the preexilic period (the major part probably edited under Hezekiah, Josiah, or both; Dtr¹), and at least one other in the exilic period (Dtr²).⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the editors of these versions incorporated various earlier sources of diverse origins, including older narratives (such as the Succession Narrative, see [Chapter Ten](#)) and materials derived from palace and Temple archives.

It is not the purpose of this volume to provide a detailed redactional reconstruction of the Deuteronomistic History as a whole, nor even of the materials regarding Solomon in particular. Nevertheless, it is argued throughout the following chapters that this combination of relatively independent sources by one or more Deuteronomistic editors provides the most fruitful model for understanding the depictions of Solomon in Samuel-Kings. Particular alternative reconstructions, for example by Timo Veijola and Thilo A. Rudnig, are analyzed and challenged in subsequent chapters, where it is demonstrated that the editor(s) of the Solomon story have generally combined their sources with only minimal direct interference, apart from the occasional insertion of speeches and editorial summaries and transitions.

As such, at least part of this material regarding Solomon probably derives from older sources that were available to the author(s)/editor(s) of Samuel-Kings. For example, the account of the wars with the Ammonites

(particularly on 2 Sam 10–12 and 1 Kgs 1–2), see especially [Chapters Five, Six, Ten, and Eleven](#).

⁴⁴ F. M. Cross, “The Themes of the Book of Kings and the Structure of the Deuteronomistic History,” *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 274–289, esp. pp. 287–289; followed by, e.g., R. D. Nelson, *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 18 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), pp. 13–14, 128; B. Peckham, *The Composition of the Deuteronomistic History*, Harvard Semitic Monographs 35 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), p. 1. These all accept that the Deuteronomistic History follows the “Tetrateuch” (Genesis–Numbers), which is essentially a priestly composition; some earlier scholars held that the Deuteronomistic History includes only Judges–2 Kings, while Genesis–Joshua make up a “Hexateuch,” so A. Kuenen, *An Historico-Critical Inquiry into the Origin and Composition of the Hexateuch* (London: MacMillan, 1886), pp. 2–16, esp. p. 3; J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*, 6th ed. (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1927; repr. 2001), pp. 223–360, esp. pp. 291–293, 358–360 (i.e., idem, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*, trans. J. S. Black and A. Menzies [New York: Meridian, 1957], pp. 228–362, esp. pp. 293–294, 360–362); S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, International Theological Library, 9th ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1913), pp. 4–5. All agree that the book of Samuel forms a part of the Deuteronomistic History.

and Arameans (2 Sam 10:1–11:1a; 12:26–31); the lists of Solomon’s officials (1 Kgs 4:1–6); his districts and administrative officers (4:7–19); the detailed descriptions of the building and vessels of the Temple (1 Kings 6; 7:13–51); the cities that Solomon gave to Hiram king of Tyre (9:10–13a); and Solomon’s international trade (10:11–12). Here the ancient materials have been interwoven into the “biblical” historical writing in Samuel-Kings, with only minimal – if any – interference or editorial coloring.⁴⁵ Generally speaking, the editors of Samuel-Kings often even include sources that contradict the fundamental theological commitments of the Deuteronomistic approach. For example, David’s son is killed as punishment for his sin in 2 Samuel 12:13–23, which contradicts Deuteronomy 24:16 and 2 Kings 14:6.⁴⁶ Also in 2 Samuel 5:21, David took the idols of the Philistines, rather than destroying them, in contradiction of the command in Deuteronomy 7:25. Similarly, when Elijah complained that they had torn down the Lord’s altars (1 Kgs 19:10, 14), and rebuilt the altar on Mount Carmel (1 Kgs 18:30–32), this contradicts the emphasis in Deuteronomy on a single place of worship (e.g., Deut 12:4–14).⁴⁷

Therefore, at least some of the material on Solomon almost certainly predates the Deuteronomistic editors, and it is entirely possible that some of it could be derived from or built on “firsthand” original sources, such as documents from the Temple and palace archives. Some could be derived from what was probably the author/editor’s main source – ספר דברי שלמה (“the book of the Deeds of Solomon”; 1 Kgs 11:41),⁴⁸ where

⁴⁵ For surveys of the historical sources regarding Solomon, see for example, Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*, pp. 66–72; N. M. Sarna, “The Biblical Sources for the History of Monarchic Period,” in A. Malamat (ed.), *The Age of the Monarchies: Political History* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Am Oved and Alexander Pelie, 1982), pp. 7–20 (also biblical historical sources for the monarchical period in general); T. Ishida, *History and Historical Writing in Ancient Israel*, *Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East* 16 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1999), pp. 102–136, esp. pp. 135–136; Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, pp. 107–137, and the references there to additional bibliography.

⁴⁶ Although Deut 24:16 is about human justice, not divine, so there is no necessary contradiction, Jeremiah and Ezekiel do make the link with God’s own justice that Deuteronomy does not, so this still contradicts beliefs attested in the later period. See also, Chapter Five, §III 1, no. 9.

⁴⁷ Regarding the latter two examples, see Kalimi, *Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 140–141.

⁴⁸ On this source, see J. Liver, “The Book of the Acts of Solomon,” *Studies in Bible and Judean Desert Scrolls* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1971), pp. 83–105 (Hebrew); M. Cogan, *1 Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, *Anchor Bible* 10 (New York: Doubleday, 2000), pp. 91–92, 342–343.

his audience could also find supplements to what the biblical historian chose to tell about the king, including “all that he did, as well as his wisdom.” Though “the book of the deeds of Solomon” was not an archival source, since it is presented as something accessible to the public, presumably it could also have included rich material regarding the king’s official activities, as well as some folklore about his wisdom, such as the judgment between the two harlots (1 Kgs 3:16–27), and the story about Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (1 Kgs 10:1–10). This book is comparable to *ספר דברי הימים למלכי ישראל* (“the book of the acts of the kings of Israel”; e.g., 1 Kgs 14:19; 15:31) and *ספר דברי הימים למלכי יהודה* (“the book of the acts of the kings of Judah”; e.g., 1 Kgs 14:29; 15:7).

However, some other materials in the description of Solomon’s reign are from the hand of the Deuteronomistic historian. This includes prayers and speeches (1 Kgs 2:2–4; 8:13–61; 9:1–9; 11:10–13, 29–39), the summary of the transgressions attributed to the king (1 Kgs 11:1–9),⁴⁹ some editorial phrases and historical and theological remarks, evaluations, and connections (e.g., 1 Kgs 2:11–12, 46b; 3:3, 4b; 11:2, 4, 6, 41–43), as well as references to the divine choice of Jerusalem (e.g., 1 Kgs 8:16, 44, 48; 11:13, 32, 36; cf. e.g., Deut 12:14, 23–25; 15:20; 17:8, 10). Moreover, due to this complex combination of sources, there are some internal contradictions,⁵⁰ inaccurate statements,⁵¹ and exaggerations.⁵² There

⁴⁹ On the Deuteronomistic character of 1 Kgs 2:2–4 and 11:9–13, see [Chapter Eleven, §V, 1](#), (b). On 1 Kgs 8:13–61, see for example, E. Talstra, *Solomon’s Prayer: Synchrony and Diachrony in the Composition of 1 Kings 8, 14–61* (Kampen: Kok, 1993); and critical commentaries on the book of Kings, such as M. J. Mulder, *1 Kings 1–11*, *Historical Commentary on the Old Testament* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), pp. 375–459; Cogan, *1 Kings*, pp. 274–293 (claiming that only a few verses go back to the early monarchic period).

⁵⁰ Compare, e.g., 1 Kgs 5:27–32 [ET, 5:13–18] with 9:20–22, and see the discussion by Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 39–40, 67–68. Another type of example is the chorological contradiction regarding the time of Hiram king of Tyre in the biblical texts compared to the information that Josephus Flavius cites from Menander. See J. Liver, “On the Question of the Chronology of Hiram King of Tyre,” *Studies in Bible and Judean Desert Scrolls* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1971), pp. 189–197; Garbini, *History and Ideology in Ancient Israel*, pp. 22–24.

⁵¹ For instance, the circumference of the bronze sea in 1 Kgs 7:23 is mathematically inexact: Based on a stated diameter of 10 cubits, it should be 31.4 cubits around, rather than 30 cubits as the text states, as already noted in the Babylonian Talmud, *Erubin* 14a–b, by Gershonides (Rabbi Levi ben Gershon; ca. 1288–1344) in his commentary on the passage, and by Baruch (Benedict) Spinoza, in the seventeenth century (in the second chapter of his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*).

⁵² For example, regarding the daily food provisions for Solomon’s palace, his wealth and his harem; 1 Kgs 5:2–3 [ET, 4:22–23]; 10:14, 27; 11:3.

are also some anachronisms in Kings, such as in 1 Kings 5:4 (ET: 4:24; see [Chapter Four](#), §II, 3).

While according to the biblical sources David and Solomon each reigned for forty years (2 Sam 5:5; 1 Kgs 2:11; 11:42),⁵³ all in all the material on Solomon is much less abundant than that on David (roughly 1 Sam 16:1–28:2; 29:1–30:31; 2 Sam 1–24). At the same time, the material on Solomon is more abundant than that on any of the kings who reigned after him. Thus, for example, Joash (Jehoash), king of Judah, reigned for forty years as well, but Kings only devotes twenty-two verses to him (2 Kgs 12:1–22; though 2 Kgs 11:1–21 also describes his rescue from Athaliah and coronation); Uzziah, king of Judah, reigned for fifty-two years, but only seven verses concern him (2 Kgs 15:1–7); Manasseh reigned for fifty-five years, and we have only eighteen verses (2 Kgs 21:1–18); and Jeroboam II, king of Israel, reigned for forty-one years, but there are only seven verses about him (2 Kgs 14:23–29). Of course, this could reflect the material that was available to the biblical historian. However, it could also show the importance of King Solomon in his eyes.

2. *The Book of Chronicles*

The second block of texts regarding Solomon appears in the *late* biblical historiography, in particular the book of Chronicles, also called the “Chronistic history” (composed in the Persian period, ca. 400–375 BCE).⁵⁴ Roughly, the second half of 1 Chronicles relates to Solomon, and 2 Chronicles 1–9 are dedicated to him. The latter chapters run more

⁵³ Of course, forty is used in biblical literature as a typological number (e.g., Gen 7:12; 8:6; Exod 24:18; Num 13:25; 14:33; Judg 5:31; 8:28; 13:1; 1 Sam 4:18; 1 Kgs 19:8; Jon 3:4; Ps 95:10). However, it can occasionally also be an accurate reference. After all, forty is just one of several other numbers regularly used typologically (e.g., 3, 7, 10, and 12), and it cannot be assumed out of hand that these never reflect reliable historical information. If he reigned for forty years, then how else could the narrator refer to this? To illustrate this point with an example from a different culture, time, and place, note that the Empress Maria Theresa of the Habsburg dynasty ruled for forty years (1740–1780). No one considers her forty-year rule as a typological number! Saying this, I am not claiming that David and Solomon must each have ruled for exactly forty years, but one cannot automatically exclude the possibility that the numbers reflect reality, at least approximately.

⁵⁴ For the dating of the Chronistic history, see I. Kalimi, *An Ancient Israelite Historian: Studies in the Chronicler, His Time, Place, and Writing*, Studia Semitica Neerlandica 46 (Assen: Royal Van Gorcum [now under: E. J. Brill, Leiden], 2005), pp. 41–65; idem, “1 and 2 Chronicles,” in M. D. Coogan (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Books of the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), vol. 1, pp. 120–132, esp. p. 125.

or less alongside the texts on Solomon in 1 Kings 3–11. Thus, from a first glance, it appears that the Chronicler's version of the story of Solomon in 2 Chronicles 1–9 is about one quarter shorter than the parallel in 1 Kings. However, there are also other texts on Solomon in the genealogical and narrative sections of 1 Chronicles (3:5; 22:5–19; 23:1; and chapters 28–29). Most of the latter have no parallel in any other biblical or extrabiblical sources (“additions”/ *Sondergut*). It is debatable whether these texts were composed from scratch by the Chronicler himself, or whether at least some of them are based on earlier sources that reached him but not us. The latter appears to be true of other “additions” in Chronicles, so it could be true of at least some of the Solomonic additions as well.⁵⁵

The Chronicler worked intensively from various angles on the texts about Solomon that he borrowed from Samuel-Kings. This includes linguistic, stylistic, and literary revisions that certainly influence the content of the texts, historiographical editing of contradictory data in his *Vorlage*, and historical and theological evaluations.⁵⁶ Sometimes the text in Chronicles stands in contrast to its parallel in Kings (e.g., cf. 2 Chr 8:2 with 1 Kgs 9:11–13). Obviously, this historian regularly interferes with his sources and reshapes them. The Chronicler's approach is demonstrated, for instance, by the fact that Samuel-Kings several times reports stories about key Israelite figures violating core laws of the Torah, while the Chronicler nearly always omits or harmonizes such contradictions.⁵⁷ The materials in Chronicles are rewritten, thirdhand, or even fourth-hand sources. Beyond any doubt, the Chronicler had his own ideological, theological, and didactic views, which are reflected by his selection and representation of the texts from the earlier biblical writings. There are also several additional anachronisms in the stories concerning Solomon and his Temple in the book of Chronicles. For example:

- (a) The Chronicler recounts that the Israelites of David's time contributed ten thousand (אֶדְרָכְנִים; 1 Chr 29:7) for the building of the House of God, using the term for Persian period gold coins, called *darics*.

⁵⁵ See Kalimi, “Placing the Chronicler in His Own Historical Context,” pp. 179–192.

⁵⁶ On this phenomenon more broadly in Chronicles, see the many examples, with detailed discussions and bibliographical references to the secondary literature, in Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*.

⁵⁷ For this and other examples, see Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 140–158.

- (b) According to the Chronicler, one of the purposes of Solomon's Temple was sacrificing "the burnt offerings *morning* and *evening*" (2 Chr 2:3 [ET, 2:4], an "addition" to 1 Kgs 5:19 [ET, 5:5]), reflecting the twice-daily *tāmîd* burnt-offering of the Second Temple period.⁵⁸
- (c) In 2 Chr 3:14 (an "addition"), the Chronicler attributes to Solomon's Temple a veil/drape (פרכת) that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, as it existed in the Second Temple of his own time, but did not exist in Solomon's Temple.⁵⁹
- (d) The Chronicler anachronistically credits to Solomon a celebration of the *Azeret* festival (עצרת; 2 Chr 7:9, an "addition"), on the eighth day of the Feast of Booths, in accordance with the priestly law (Lev 23:33–36; Num 29:35–36) that regulated cultic life in his days in *Yehud Medinta* (the Persian Province of Judah), but not in the time of Solomon in the tenth century BCE.⁶⁰

3. Allusions to Solomon in the Hagiographa

The third block of material is found in some references and allusions to Solomon scattered here and there in several books of the Ketubim (Hagiographa: the Writings). This includes Nehemiah's memoirs (Neh 13:26), the wisdom literature, such as Proverbs (1:1; 10:1; 25:1) and perhaps Qohelet (1:1), and the poetic literature, such as the Song of Songs (1:1; see also 1:5; 3:7–11; 8:11–12), and some Psalms (Ps 72 and 127). It is unlikely that much, if any, of these psalms and wisdom books ascribed to King Solomon came from his hand. The same is also true of the later apocryphal or deuterocanonical text known as the *Wisdom of Solomon*, and the pseudepigrapha, such as the *Testament of Solomon*. Nonetheless, even if these texts were based on solid historical data – which is doubtful – they are unable to help a modern historian understand the major lines of Solomon's history. Such texts are instead helpful for tracing the development of some features of the Solomon tradition through the generations.

⁵⁸ On this issue, see Chapter Thirteen, §V, (1).

⁵⁹ See in detail, Chapter Thirteen, §V, (5).

⁶⁰ See Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 147–149.

IV. CONCLUSION

For the time being, direct epigraphic evidence regarding Solomon is not available, and the significance of the other archaeological findings at various sites in the Land of Israel is unclear and sharply disputed. Archaeologists even disagree about elementary terminology referring to different archaeological ages. Especially the dating of the period referred to as Iron IIA diverges radically from one scholar to another, even among those who uphold the conservative model, and still more between those who reject it. Of course, archaeology requires interpretation, and archaeologists often differ about the interpretation of archaeological data. Nevertheless, as of now the archaeological data that could be related to the Solomonic period is problematic and the major differences of opinion among archaeologists on this period do not allow us to rely on it confidently. It is not sufficient either to prove or disprove the reality of Solomon or the major features of the biblical stories about his reign.

Even *if* the Low Chronology were to prove true and demonstrate, for example, that Solomon cannot have fortified the cities of Hazor, Meggido, and Gezer, that would not yet disprove that he ruled over an extended kingdom (simply because he could rule the area even if he did not fortify the cities), much less would it disprove that he existed at all, nor that at least some of the events of his reign recorded in the biblical texts are based in reality. By the same token, however, even if the High Chronology is correct, that would prove only that these cities were fortified sometime in the tenth century, not that the entire biblical account of Solomon's reign and kingdom is accurate. In either case, the biblical texts remain the only explicit accounts we have of a king named Solomon, the extent of his kingdom, and the nature of his activities. Since these accounts therefore can neither be conclusively confirmed nor disproven by outside evidence, all that remains is the careful evaluation of the accounts themselves, in order to determine as far as possible which details are plausible, and which more likely reflect later or nonhistorical realities.

In the case of Solomon, such careful research on the texts in the biblical historiographies remains the primary basis for any historical description of his life and period. Although the biblical texts are not free from exaggerations, or late editorial, theological, and ideological elements, and the interpretation of many of them is no less controversial than that of the archaeological material, still they may contain valuable historical information that should be carefully identified and scrutinized. By no means should they simply be dismissed as untrustworthy.

CHAPTER 3

Challenging Recent Dismissals of the United Monarchy

I. INTRODUCTION

As previously stated ([Chapter One, §II](#)), the primary purpose of this volume *is not* to provide a comprehensive historical reconstruction of King Solomon and his reign. Instead, it scrutinizes and compares the various biblical literary and historiographical accounts of this king. Nevertheless, particularly in light of some recent tendencies to dismiss the historicity of the vast majority of Solomon's activities and achievements, or even to deny that there ever was a United Monarchy at all, the subject cannot be passed over without comment.

Until the last decades, there was a broad critical consensus regarding the historicity of the United Monarchy of Saul, David, and Solomon (and its division as Israel and Judah). This consensus was built primarily on the biblical texts themselves, but was also seen to be supported by a range of outside material, including extrabiblical sources and archaeological finds dated to the period of the United Monarchy.¹

In recent decades, however, continued exegetical and archaeological investigations and shifting methodologies have raised questions about the historical reliability of the biblical accounts. On this basis, a number of so-called minimalist, revisionist, deconstructionist, or nihilist approaches have denied that the biblical narratives can be supported by archaeological evidence. They have attempted to turn upside down the entire

¹ For a summary of this consensus and a discussion of some challenges to it, see G. N. Knoppers, "The Vanishing Solomon: The Disappearance of the United Monarchy from Recent Histories of Ancient Israel," *JBL* 116 (1997), pp. 19–44.

modern historical-critical biblical scholarship of more than two centuries regarding the history of ancient Israel in general, and the United Monarchy in particular. But are these conclusions justified? Are the descriptions of Solomon's kingdom preserved in the biblical tradition – as a whole or in their main features – truly just the product of the fertile imaginations of later Judahite or Jewish writers, or are the accounts of Solomon – despite some later editorial layers and legendary elements – based on genuine historical sources concerning a real king and his kingdom? Are the current archaeological and limited epigraphical findings (such as the Tel Dan inscription and the Pharaoh Shishak inscriptions from the temple of Amon, at Karnak, and the fragment of his stele from Megiddo)² genuinely sufficient either to prove or disprove the existence of Solomon and the main features of the biblical accounts concerning his reign? Should the archaeological materials really be given automatic priority over all other sources of evidence, including the biblical texts, no matter how unclear and disputed they are? Should the biblical materials be dismissed *a priori* as unreliable, or are precious historical records preserved among them? Is there any way to achieve a reasonable balance between the available archaeological and historiographical materials, which are all quite complicated?

This chapter and the next investigate these questions through a critical examination of the presuppositions and arguments of several so-called minimalists or revisionists, including G. Garbini, P. R. Davies, N. P. Lemche, T. L. Thompson, I. Finkelstein, E. A. Knauf, and A. G. Auld. In light of a careful analysis and synthesis of all the available data related to Solomon's period – written sources as well as archaeological finds (see [Chapter Two](#)) – it will be seen that the dismissals by these scholars of the reliability of the biblical texts, especially as concerns the United Monarchy, are based on several unfounded assertions and superficial arguments.

II. GARBINI'S DISMISSAL OF THE UNITED MONARCHY

In order to illustrate the methods of the minimalists / revisionists, it is worth examining a concrete example in some detail, particularly that of one of the earliest proponents, who is relatively “moderate” among them.

² On the Tel Dan inscription as well as Shishak's campaign and inscriptions, see [Chapter Two](#), §I.

In his 1988 book, *History and Ideology in Ancient Israel* (Italian original: 1986), Giovanni Garbini presents the following arguments against the historical reliability of the accounts of the United Monarchy in Samuel-Kings: (1) He claims that the descriptions of Solomon's empire in 1 Kings 5:1, 4 (ET, 4:21, 24) are late exaggerations.³ (2) He notes that a few texts contradict each other, most notably the story of David defeating Goliath in 1 Samuel 17, and the claim in 2 Samuel 21:19 that Goliath was killed by Elhanan.⁴ (3) Garbini objects to the claims that Hiram, king of Tyre, was both a friend of David "all the days [of his life?]" (2 Sam 5:11; 1 Kgs 5:15 [ET, 5:1]), and a trading partner with Solomon throughout his life (1 Kgs 5:15–26 [ET, 5:1–12]; 7:13, 40, 45; 9:11–14, 27; 10:11, 22). Garbini estimates that this would imply that Hiram reigned at least fifty-four years, which he considers implausible.⁵ (4) There are tensions between the list of the deeds of David's "men of valor" in 2 Samuel 23:8–39 and some of the reports of David's wars, especially in 2 Samuel 8 and 10, which Garbini thinks undermine the reliability of the latter.⁶ (5) Solomon's marriage to Pharaoh's daughter and reception of Gezer as a dowry (1 Kgs 3:1, 9:16) is said to contradict the claim that David conquered the Philistines, and to run counter to established Egyptian practice.⁷ (6) The claim that Pharaoh Shishak's invasion occurred in the fifth year of Rehoboam (1 Kgs 14:25), not during the reign of Solomon, is deemed to be unlikely.⁸ (7) The claim that Solomon fortified Gezer, Hazor, and Megiddo (1 Kgs 9:15) cannot be confirmed by archaeology.⁹ (8) The reports of Solomon's international trade (e.g., 1 Kgs 10) are said to be contradicted by the lack of foreign imports found in tenth-century strata and the "fact" that Tyre and Syria did not

³ Garbini, *History and Ideology in Ancient Israel*, p. 21, following J. A. Montgomery and H. S. Gehman, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Kings*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1951), pp. 126–129.

⁴ Garbini, *History and Ideology in Ancient Israel*, p. 22; he also claims a contradiction regarding the rule of Gath in 1 Sam 27:2–7, 2 Sam 8:1, and 1 Kgs 2:39.

⁵ Garbini, *History and Ideology in Ancient Israel*, pp. 22–24. However, Garbini is unaware of the study by Liver, "On the Chronological Question of Hiram King of Tyre," pp. 189–197. Liver concludes that Hiram began to reign in 979/8 BCE, and Solomon's Temple was built eleven years later, in 968/967 BCE, that is, in the fourth year of Solomon, whose reign began in 971/970 BCE.

⁶ Garbini, *History and Ideology in Ancient Israel*, pp. 25–27. In particular, the former refers only to wars with Philistines and Moabites, while the latter include also wars with Arameans, Edomites, and others.

⁷ Garbini, *History and Ideology in Ancient Israel*, pp. 27–28, 30.

⁸ Garbini, *History and Ideology in Ancient Israel*, pp. 28–30.

⁹ Garbini, *History and Ideology in Ancient Israel*, pp. 30–31.

expand their trading connections until the ninth or eighth centuries.¹⁰ On the basis of these arguments, Garbini concludes that:

David never killed Goliath, never knew Hiram of Tyre, never fought against the Idumaeans, Ammonites, Amalekites and Aramaeans and did not create an empire. If we are to believe the biblical text he fought only the Philistines and the Moabites and managed to establish himself as a ruler in Jerusalem after fighting against Saul . . . His son Solomon, who succeeded in preserving his father's small state, built a palace for himself with a small temple for the dynastic god as an annexe [*sic*] . . . but he did not marry any daughter of Pharaoh, did not enrich himself with international trade and was also in all probability forced to suffer the military expedition of Pharaoh Sheshonk. This is the most that can be conceded to the history of the biblical text (the least is to consider it a complete invention) from the point of view of a record of "what actually happened"; all the rest is part of the story of Hebrew ideology.¹¹

However, on closer scrutiny, several of Garbini's points are dubious. For example, his claims that "insignificant archaeological remains *can certainly be related* to this [i.e., tenth] century," or "the monopoly of iron and its working among the Philistines in the time of Saul [1 Sam 13:19–21, that is, in *the last quarter of the eleventh century*] *confirm* the general situation *in the tenth century* and the improbability of a strong Hebrew state in that period" (italics added).¹²

Moreover, Garbini's overall conclusion badly overstates his own argumentation: Though he is correct that there are tensions between specific biblical texts (the most notable are those involving David's defeat of Goliath), he exaggerates the significance of these particular cases as though they were characteristic of the entire history of David's and Solomon's periods. For example, Garbini objects to the accounts of David's wars in 2 Samuel 8 and 10, which describe David's defeat of Philistines, Moabites, Arameans, Ammonites, Amalekites, and Edomites, on the grounds that the list of David's mighty men in 2 Samuel 23 refers only to victories over Philistines and (in one case) Moabites, but to none of the other peoples. However, this only proves that the list of David's mighty men derives from a different source than do the accounts of his wars, confirming that the editor of Samuel has *not* modified his sources to make them consistent, much less created them from scratch. That by no means proves that 2 Samuel 23 is historical while 2 Samuel 8 is nonhistorical; it could simply be that these two sources derive from or refer to different times in David's

¹⁰ Garbini, *History and Ideology in Ancient Israel*, p. 31.

¹¹ Garbini, *History and Ideology in Ancient Israel*, pp. 31–32.

¹² Garbini, *History and Ideology in Ancient Israel*, p. 32.

life. Furthermore, while Garbini notes that 1 Kings 11:14–25 admits that “both the Edomites and the Aramaeans regained their independence” under Solomon, he sees this only as further proof of the small size of David’s kingdom, when in fact it confirms that David *did* defeat the Arameans and Edomites (otherwise it makes no sense to say that they rebelled), which contradicts Garbini’s conclusion.

Garbini’s other arguments are even less conclusive, as they cannot even demonstrate contradictions, but only details that he finds “implausible” for one reason or another. For example, he denies that Pharaoh would have given his daughter to a minor king such as Solomon, claiming that “the Pharaohs were the only rulers to marry foreign princesses but *never* to give Egyptian princesses to foreign rulers” (emphasis original).¹³ However, as Kenneth A. Kitchen has shown, diplomatic marriages involving the Egyptian royal family were not unprecedented.¹⁴

In 1 Kings 14:25 it is said that Pharaoh Shishak invaded during the fifth year of the reign of Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, which seems to correspond to the campaign by Pharaoh Shishak I described in a victory stele dated to the twenty-first year of his reign, preserved at Karnak. Garbini notes that the Egyptian chronology is uncertain during this period, and that it is not clear that Shishak’s campaign was really as late as the biblical text claims. Despite this admission of uncertainty, however, Garbini then asserts that the campaign most likely occurred in Solomon’s reign, without pointing to any concrete evidence for such a dating.¹⁵ Garbini himself can only claim that his proposal is “approximate” and “quite reasonable,”¹⁶ yet on this basis he concludes that it “completely discredits” the biblical account.¹⁷ This is simply inaccurate. At most he has raised some questions about one aspect of the biblical account, but no more. The same is also true regarding his observations that Gezer, Hazor, and Megiddo cannot be conclusively tied to Solomon,¹⁸ and that

¹³ Garbini, *History and Ideology in Ancient Israel*, p. 27.

¹⁴ Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, pp. 110–112. See also, [Chapter Four](#), §II, 4.

¹⁵ Garbini, *History and Ideology in Ancient Israel*, p. 30.

¹⁶ Garbini, *History and Ideology in Ancient Israel*, p. 29.

¹⁷ Garbini, *History and Ideology in Ancient Israel*, p. 30. In contrast, for the historicity of Shishak’s campaign in the time of Rehoboam, see Na’aman, “Sources and Composition in the History of David,” pp. 170–171. For a number of other perspectives on how Shishak’s campaign might be coordinated with ancient Israelite history, see recently, James and van der Veen (eds.), *Solomon and Shishak: Current Perspectives from Archaeology, Epigraphy, History and Chronology*.

¹⁸ On the debates and uncertainty concerning these sites, see [Chapter Two](#), §II.

archaeology has turned up little concrete evidence of international trade during the tenth century. Depending on whether one accepts the High Chronology or the Low Chronology, the archaeological findings might either support Solomon's building activities, or undermine certain details of the text, but on no account have they conclusively disproven the historicity of Solomon's building projects or empire. Therefore, Garbini's conclusion that the *most* that can be said is that David and Solomon ruled only a small territory is precisely backwards: That is the *least* that can be said, even if all Garbini's "evidence" were accepted. None of the points he raises can prove that the overall biblical narrative is false, yet he uses these purported improbabilities as a reason to ignore all the rest of the biblical material concerning David and Solomon, most of which is unaffected by the points he raises.

In fact, such critiques are directed at a remarkably small set of verses out of the entire account of the United Monarchy, consisting mostly of summary statements and isolated references. Even if every one of Garbini's critiques were valid, none would have any direct bearing on the bulk of the stories concerning David and Solomon. Thus, he dismisses the entire account of David's conquests on the grounds that 2 Samuel 23 does not fully confirm 2 Samuel 8, without even discussing the numerous other narratives across 2 Samuel that describe David's wars. There are inconsistencies, of course, and these certainly demand that we treat these accounts with caution and critical evaluation, but these very inconsistencies should also invite us to consider what older sources could stand behind them. Garbini shows no interest in doing so, simply using the inconsistencies as a reason to dismiss the whole.

Further, even if Garbini's critiques of the extended empire of David and Solomon were conclusive, many of the stories concerning these two kings do not depend on any claim concerning the size of their kingdom. For instance, nothing in the account of Solomon's succession in 1 Kings 1–2 depends on any conclusion regarding the size of David and Solomon's empire or capital. The story takes place entirely within the City of David and at the Gihon Spring, involves no foreign powers, and makes no claims that have been disproven by archaeological investigation. Its historical reliability, therefore, is unaffected by Garbini's critiques, and must be evaluated on other grounds. In fact, this is true of most of the stories preserved in the biblical text regarding the United Monarchy. We simply do not have any extrabiblical accounts of these events that could confirm or deny whether they could have occurred or not, so the most that we can do is evaluate each text carefully, and if

possible, to compare it with available finds from the ancient Near Eastern world. To simply dismiss all of this *a priori* as “Hebrew ideology” is not reasonable, as will be seen further.

III. OTHER MINIMALIST / REVISIONIST APPROACHES

At least Garbini engages with some biblical texts and archaeological materials, inconclusive and overstated as his arguments are. Many of the minimalists / revisionists who have followed his lead do not even bother to discuss the evidence in detail, yet they draw from it theories of the development of the biblical tradition that are even more extreme than that of Garbini. For example:

Philip R. Davies claims that the entire biblical literature was “composed” in “the period between the sixth and third centuries BCE.”¹⁹ He thus asserts that “the clerks of the Ministry of History in Yehud were already claiming their tiny province to be the relic of a once mighty empire . . . ruled over by David and Solomon. Was it perhaps on the basis of this fictional claim, which a Persian king, no less, has been made to endorse . . . that latter Judean kings, the Hasmonaeans, set about recreating what they believed to be the boundaries of historical Israel . . . ?”²⁰ Though Davies denies that this means “all the *content* of this literature arose only at this time,” he insists that “the *ideological structure* of the biblical literature can only be explained in the last analysis as a product of the Persian period.”²¹

Similarly, Niels Peter Lemche and Thomas L. Thompson consider all the biblical accounts of the United Monarchy to be invented stories and therefore unreliable. They state categorically: “In the history of Palestine that we have presented, there is no room for a historical United Monarchy, or for such kings as those presented in the biblical stories of Saul, David and Solomon. The early period in which the traditions have set their narratives is an imaginary world of long ago that never existed as such.”²² Elsewhere Thompson goes even further, and concludes: “The stories of the

¹⁹ P. R. Davies, *In Search of “Ancient Israel,”* Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 148 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), p. 105.

²⁰ Davies, *In Search of “Ancient Israel,”* p. 90. On p. 94, Davies concludes: “the society which grew up in Yehud in the Persian period is the matrix for the production of the biblical Israel.” See also *ibid.*, pp. 24, 95.

²¹ Davies, *In Search of “Ancient Israel,”* p. 94.

²² See N. P. Lemche and T. L. Thompson, “Did Biran Kill David? The Bible in the Light of Archaeology,” *JSOT* 64 (1994), pp. 3–22, esp. p. 19; cf. T. L. Thompson, *The Mythic Past: Biblical Archaeology and the Myth of Israel* (London: Basic Books, 1999), p. 206.

golden age of the United Monarchy reflect the fantasy and ambitions of Jerusalem of the Maccabees,” in the second century BCE.²³ He continues: “It is to just this larger political world of the second century BCE that the national epics of Samuel-Kings and Chronicles were addressed.”²⁴

A slightly different theory, but with similar results to those of Davies, Lemche, and Thompson, is presented by some other scholars, such as Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman. Due in part to the discovery of the Tel Dan inscription, which they and most other scholars (apart from Lemche and Thompson) understand to refer to the “House of David,” Finkelstein and Silberman accept that David and Solomon existed in reality (as Garbini also did). However, based on “glimpses at the archaeological reality,”²⁵ some surveys of the Judean hills, and the presumed size of tenth-century Jerusalem, they conclude that David and Solomon could have been only minor rulers who controlled Jerusalem (which was “no more than a typical highland village”).²⁶ They conclude that the extent of their kingdom was probably no more than “about five thousand people scattered among Jerusalem, Hebron, and about twenty small villages in Judah, with additional groups probably continuing as pastoralists.”²⁷ Thus, according to them, these kings had no extended empire as described in the Hebrew Bible, and no significant geopolitical impact. The references to their international trade “*no doubt* reflect the participation of seventh century Judah in the lucrative Arabian trade” (*italics mine*).²⁸ The stories about David and Solomon are merely legends and folktales reflecting “a mythical golden age,”²⁹ composed several centuries later, in the time of King Josiah of Judah, in the seventh century BCE. Thus they assert:

In late monarchic times, an elaborate theology had been developed in Judah and Jerusalem to validate the connection between the heir of David and the destiny of the entire people of Israel . . . The glorious epic of the united monarchy was . . .³⁰ a brilliant composition that wove together ancient heroic tales and legends into a coherent and persuasive prophecy for the people of Israel in

²³ Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, p. 206. ²⁴ Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, p. 209.

²⁵ Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, p. 145.

²⁶ Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, p. 142.

²⁷ Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, p. 143.

²⁸ Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, p. 143.

²⁹ Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, p. 143.

³⁰ Here, Finkelstein and Silberman make a comparison between the biblical historiography of the monarchic period in Samuel-Kings and the stories about the prehistory of Israel, saying that the former are “like the stories of the patriarchs and the sagas of the Exodus and conquest” (*ibid.*, p. 144).

the seventh century BCE . . . This was Josiah . . . [who] was able to roll history back from his own days to the time of the legendary united monarchy.³¹

Ernst Axel Knauf and Philippe Guillaume declare another theory:

The Story of Solomon (1 Kings 1–11) is the overture to the history of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, projecting all the glory of the Assyrian Empire onto a fabulous past to show how such an empire can only lead to ruin. The prosperity of Israel in the time of the Omrides in the ninth century BCE was transferred to Solomon, including the boats sent to Ophir, the mighty palace, and the list of 12 districts (1 Kings 4). The portrayal of David the warrior and Solomon the builder corresponds, with some exaggeration, to Omri the founder of the dynasty and to Ahab his son.³² The biblical Solomon inherited from Jeroboam II the building of Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer and the horse trade from Egypt to Assyria.³³

From a different angle, A. Graeme Auld denies that Samuel-Kings should be regarded as an older composition and historically more accurate than Chronicles, claiming that all these books are postexilic compositions.³⁴ He assumes that the Chronicler did not use Samuel-Kings as his *Vorlage*, but rather shared with their authors a shorter “common inherited text,”³⁵ a non-Deuteronomistic source that recounted the history of *Judah*, from the death of Saul down to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian exile. Each author of the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles used and expanded the common source according to their own theological views and unique ways of defending their own versions of history. Thus, the textual parallels between Chronicles and Samuel-Kings stem from an earlier common source (rather than a dependence of the former on the latter), and all the nonparallel texts in Samuel-Kings and Chronicles are expansions by their authors in the Persian period. Consequently, Auld considers Kings and Chronicles “not as history and revised history, nor as text and commentary, but as alternative or competing appropriations of an earlier story of Judah’s kings. Deuteronomy, the date of its completion pushed inexorably later, emerges as

³¹ Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, p. 144, cf. p. 145.

³² Here Knauf and Guillaume refer to M. H. Niemann, “The Socio-political Shadow Cast by the Biblical Solomon,” in L. K. Handy (ed.), *Age of Solomon: Scholarship at the Turn of the Millennium* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), pp. 252–299.

³³ See E. A. Knauf and P. Guillaume, *A History of Biblical Israel: The Fate of the Tribes and Kingdoms from Merenptah to Bar Kochba* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2016), p. 76. Obviously, denying the very existence of the United Kingdom requires a denial of the division of that kingdom, which is described in 1 Kgs 12 (// 2 Chr 10).

³⁴ Auld, *Kings without Privilege*. ³⁵ Auld, *Kings without Privilege*, p. 4.

influenced by the story that follows, and not simply the source of ideas and language.”³⁶ In this way, Auld strives to equate the historical credibility of Samuel-Kings with what he defines, without any hesitation, as the “historical unreliability and artificiality of the books of Chronicles.”³⁷ He attempts to dismantle or at least to *minimize*, as much as possible, the historicity of Samuel-Kings.³⁸ Such a theory, if accepted, would thus imply that nearly the whole Succession Narrative in 2 Samuel 9–10 and 1 Kings 1–2, including the circumstances of Solomon’s birth and rise to kingship, is a late composition from the post-exilic period, since it does not appear in this form in Chronicles.

IV. IS THERE ANY FOUNDATION FOR THE MINIMALIST / REVISIONIST APPROACHES?

Despite their confident rejections of the biblical tradition, the methods and arguments of the minimalists / revisionists are open to serious question. Since detailed critiques of their views have already been made by host of fine biblicists, historians, archeologists, paleographers, and philologists,³⁹

³⁶ Auld, *Kings without Privilege*, p. viii. Auld assumes that Deuteronomy is composed and influenced by his imaginary book called “history of Judah.” He also denies that the book of Kings as such is a Deuteronomistic work; see, *ibid.*, pp. 154, 173–174.

³⁷ Auld, *Kings without Privilege*, p. 3. However, not only is it probable that much of the nonparallel material in Samuel-Kings derives from earlier historical sources, but even that some of the nonparallel texts in Chronicles contain historical data; see Kalimi, “Placing the Chronicler in His Own Historical Context,” pp. 179–192.

³⁸ Auld, *Kings without Privilege*, p. 4.

³⁹ For surveys and rejections of the minimalist / nihilist assertions, see for example, I. Provan, “Ideologies, Literary and Critical: Reflections on Recent Writing on the History of Israel,” *JBL* 114 (1995), pp. 585–606; A. F. Rainey, “Uncritical Criticism,” *JAOS* 115 (1995), pp. 101–104; J. Pasto, “When the End is the Beginning? Or When the Biblical Past is the Political Present: Some Thoughts on Ancient Israel, ‘Post-Exilic Judaism,’ and the Politics of Biblical Scholarship,” *SJOT* 12 (1998), pp. 157–202. Pasto argues that an anti-Zionist agenda may be detected in the works of scholars such as Niels Peter Lemche and Thomas L. Thompson, who “present their post-exilic Judaism of contradiction and repression as a metaphor for the Zionist movement, the State of Israel, and the repression of Palestinian nationalists” (*ibid.*, pp. 180–202, esp. p. 196, and cf. also p. 197). However, a few pages later, Pasto contradicts himself, as follows: “This is not to say that Lemche, Thompson, Davies, and others are anti-Zionist, anti-Biblical, or anti-Semitic, and I would defend them against such charges” (*ibid.*, p. 200). See also K. L. Younger, Jr., “Early Israel in Recent Biblical Scholarship,” in D. W. Baker et al. (eds.), *The Face of Old Testament Studies* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 176–206; L. L. Grabbe, “Writing Israel’s History at the End of the Twentieth Century,” in A. Lemaire and M. Sæbø (eds.), *Congress Volume Oslo 1998* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2000), pp. 203–218; idem, “Hat die Bibel Doch Recht? A Review of T. L. Thompson’s ‘The Bible in History’,”

it is not necessary to repeat all the arguments, but only to highlight a few decisive objections to their methods and approaches. Not every point raised here applies to each particular scholar noted earlier, but each point challenges critical assumptions shared by most of them:

- (1) The revisionist / minimalist theories carelessly dismiss the entire biblical record as ahistorical and unreliable, while criticizing mainstream scholars for accepting it without confirmation from extrabiblical evidence. As Thompson puts it: “The character of the narratives themselves [concerning the United Monarchy] is not historical, and historicity – even historical relevance – cannot be assumed of them. ‘External evidence’ is no longer a luxury but a necessity, and without it we simply cannot write a history of Israel.”⁴⁰

However, such dismissals are not built on any detailed analysis of the biblical texts, particularly historiographic literature, but rather on an extremely selective and overly skeptical reading of a handful of passages, when the text is discussed at all. For instance, the section of Thompson’s book from which the above quotation derives, on “The United Monarchy and the Origin of Israel,” is only five pages long and does not cite or discuss a *single* biblical text.⁴¹ Similarly, in

SJOT 14 (2000), pp. 117–139; Z. Talshir, “Textual and Literary Criticism of the Bible in Post-Modern Times: The Untimely Demise of Classical Biblical Philology,” *Henoah* 21 (1999), pp. 235–252; idem, “When Has the Bible Been Written?” [in Hebrew] *Beit Mikra* 49 (2004), pp. 15–30; A. Ben-Tor, “Archaeology – Bible – History,” in I. L. Levin and A. Mazar (eds.), *The Dispute Regarding the Historical Truth in the Hebrew Bible* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 2001), pp. 17–25; B. Oded, “The People of Israel in the Biblical Period: History or Myth?” [in Hebrew] *Beit Mikra* 47 (2002), pp. 25–32; Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, pp. 452–464; Kalimi, “Kings with Privilege,” pp. 498–517; idem, “Die Quelle(n) der Textparallelen zwischen Samuel-Könige und Chronik,” pp. 11–30; A. Frisch, *Torn Asunder: The Division of the Kingdom Narrative in the Book of Kings* [in Hebrew] (Beer Sheva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, 2013), pp. 19–25. Also Frisch refers to the political agenda of the minimalists (*ibid.*, pp. 21–25), as several other scholars have already noted, such as J. Lassner and S. I. Troen, “Jews, Arabs, and Modern Biblical Scholarship,” *Jews and Muslims in the Arab World: Haunted by Pasts Real and Imagined* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), pp. 217–242, esp. pp. 230–242 and the further bibliography listed there.

⁴⁰ T. L. Thompson, *Early History of the Israelite People: From the Written & Archaeological Sources*, Studies in the History of the Ancient Near East 4 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), p. 110.

⁴¹ Thompson, *Early History of the Israelite People*, pp. 108–112, refers once to “the reconstructions of the Genesis–2 Kings traditions,” which he waves away as “both inappropriate and of limited use to the task of writing a history of Israel’s origins” (*ibid.*, p. 111). Otherwise, he speaks entirely in the abstract about biblical texts that he

Davies' book, *In Search of "Ancient Israel,"* the entire index of biblical references (which appears to be comprehensive) barely fills a page and a half.⁴² Further, even where Davies refers to particular texts, there is no sustained engagement with their details, whether on philological, source-, redaction- or even historical-critical levels. Thus, one of Davies's fullest discussions of a biblical text is a comparison of the biblical and Assyrian accounts of Sennacherib's invasion of Judah in 701 BCE, where he explicitly states that "I am not really interested in contrasting the biblical and Assyrian accounts."⁴³ But proper historical method demands that one perform just such a comparative analysis that Davies dismisses as uninteresting. How can one write a history of a period without dealing in detail with the surviving texts that describe that period, whether or not one accepts their historicity? He has presented a conclusion without offering any detailed analysis of the sources to back it up. Instead, he offers no more than a rough outline of each, before asserting that, while these accounts probably refer to "something that happened," each is a "literary construct" that serves primarily ideological needs. Therefore, any reconstructions made on their basis are no more valid than attempting to reconstruct "what really happened" in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*.⁴⁴

never cites nor discusses. In fact, in his entire long discussions of the transition from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age (*ibid.*, pp. 146–170, 215–300), there appear to be only *three* biblical references of any kind: In a footnote he dismisses an "effort to harmonize 2 Samuel and 1 Kings with the excavation reports" from Megiddo" (*ibid.*, p. 255, note 114); in one sentence he claims that "the Philistines" referred to "in the stories of Judges and 1–2 Samuel . . . do not exist as a people apart from the biblical tradition's late ethnocentric perspective" (*ibid.*, p. 272); and in two sentences he rejects some attempts to use Judges 5 as evidence of an early "Israel" (*ibid.*, p. 275). None of these passages are actually discussed, nor are any other biblical texts relevant to the origins of the monarchy even mentioned, yet apparently this is deemed sufficient to dismiss the historical value of the entire biblical historiography! The 482-page book does not even include a scripture index. The case is little better in Thompson's later book, *The Mythic Past*, which does at least refer to a few biblical texts in its discussion of "the historical David" (namely 1 Sam 24–26; 1 Kgs 9:15; 11; 15:16–20; 2 Kgs; 2 Chr 9–10; see *ibid.*, pp. 200–210), but none of these are discussed in any detail, serving merely to refer to parts of the biblical tradition that he rejects. Also there, Thompson's lengthy retelling of the history of "Palestine" from its earliest history to the exile hardly mentions any biblical texts (*ibid.*, pp. 103–225).

⁴² Davies, *In Search of "Ancient Israel,"* pp. 171–172.

⁴³ Davies, *In Search of "Ancient Israel,"* pp. 33–35 esp. p. 34.

⁴⁴ Davies, *In Search of "Ancient Israel,"* p. 35. For a detailed discussion of what actually can be reconstructed concerning Sennacherib's invasion and the various ancient accounts of it and archaeological finds, see I. Kalimi and S. Richardson (eds.), *Sennacherib at the*

Thompson makes the same claim regarding the United Monarchy, with different parallels: “To compare the Bible’s stories about David with early Iron Age Palestine is like comparing the story of Gilgamesh with Bronze Age Uruk, Achilles with ancient Mycenae or Arthur with early medieval England.”⁴⁵

This will not do at all. Thompson and Davies have provided no detailed comparison that could demonstrate that the biblical texts concerning David or Hezekiah reflect a similar genre, a comparable dating relative to the events described, or an equivalent attitude towards their sources, as one finds in Shakespeare or in the myths concerning Gilgamesh, Achilles or King Arthur. Just because it is *possible* to write myth or historical fiction does not prove that this is what the biblical authors have done. Where is the evidence that the biblical authors were writing this kind of fiction? No such comparisons, nor any detailed arguments at all, are ever brought by Davies, Thompson, or the other minimalists. These anachronistic analogies are simply asserted, without concrete evidence or any real examination of the biblical texts, merely in order to justify the *a priori* dismissal of the biblical text as history.

However, while there is no doubt that the biblical texts, like *all* historiography, are shaped by ideological concerns, such blanket dismissals are wholly insufficient, asserting rather than demonstrating that the biblical texts are nonhistorical, without ever offering a detailed demonstration of that claim.⁴⁶ Just because the biblical texts have their own theological agendas does not prove that they have no historical value. The biblical records are themselves evidence (*at least* for the periods in which they were

Gate of Jerusalem: Story, History and Historiography, Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 71 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2014).

⁴⁵ Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, pp. 205–206, esp. p. 206; cf. also pp. 11–15, where he dismisses the claim that extrabiblical references to the Omride dynasty of Israel give any grounds for assuming that the biblical stories themselves are historical, also with an analogy to Shakespeare: “Evidence suggests that the Bible, like Shakespeare, often invokes fictional kings in confecting its stories” (*ibid.*, p. 15). See the critique of this point by Grabbe, “Hat die Bibel doch Recht?” pp. 121–122, who objects that, if one excludes the kings of the United Monarchy (since appealing to their “invention” would be a circular argument), “I find no evidence that any of the Israelite or Judean kings were invented . . . T[hompson] gives no examples to show any invented kings in the Kings narrative except perhaps the existence of two Jeroboams (p. 23)” (*ibid.*, p. 122).

⁴⁶ On this point, see also Grabbe, “Hat die Bibel doch recht?” pp. 120–123, 127–129, and 136–137.

composed and edited), so any conclusions about the historical reliability of any particular detail can only be based on a thorough analysis of individual texts, which Davies, Thompson, and the other minimalists completely avoid.

Certainly, some elements in the biblical accounts are likely late, legendary, exaggerated or interpretive (as many mainstream scholars already admit), but the arguments brought against the biblical text *as a whole* do not stand up to scrutiny. If you dismiss the whole Bible out of hand, then of course you will also dismiss every conclusion based on it, but that is not a reasonable approach either to the critical evaluation of biblical literature, or to the historical reconstruction of the history of ancient Israel.

- (2) The biblical accounts are the only ancient sources we have that offer a continuous narrative of ancient Israelite history in general, and the United Monarchy in particular. The minimalists / revisionists do not even claim to have any more reliable historical narratives of the period that contradict the biblical accounts. Why then should anyone accept their rejection of the biblical sources? Moreover, Davies himself admits that, "We can learn from the results of archaeology something of the social conditions of Iron Age Palestine," but archaeology offers nothing comparable to the "simplified yet dramatic portrayal" that the Bible, like "all great artistic products" provides.⁴⁷ Without such a narrative, he and the other minimalists conclude that we cannot reconstruct the period at all. In fact, only on the basis of such a structure is it possible to place individual data points – whether derived from archaeological, epigraphical, or any other sources – within the larger flow of history, or to compare the narrative framework itself with the available outside data to see which elements of it fit and which do not. In the case of the United Monarchy, since the minimalists / revisionists reject the only ancient narratives and historical

⁴⁷ Davies, *In Search of "Ancient Israel,"* p. 30. He further acknowledges that, "Necessary to all such speculation [about what actually happened] is some kind of historical outline, and not just a sequence of dates but a *Gestalt*, an image of a society in which certain beliefs and certain kinds of behavior govern. Such a lavishly detailed portrait is impossible to construct from elsewhere [than the biblical texts]." See in more detail Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, p. 410; idem, "Placing the Chronicler in His Own Historical Context," pp. 179–192. This argument is stated already in my dissertation (Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1989), pp. 17, 324–325; cf. also Na'aman, "Sources and Composition in the History of David," p. 170.

framework that we have – namely, the biblical ones – they are left with *nothing* on which to build an alternative framework of their own. Therefore, they dismiss the historicity of the whole period, rather than seeking to reconstruct it. Of course, at points where the biblical narratives are contradicted by the available data, that should be shown on the basis of detailed comparison, but if one rejects the narrative *a priori*, without even offering such a comparison to justify rejection, there is nothing to discuss.

- (3) Although the minimalists/revisionists claim that their dismissal is the necessary conclusion drawn from critical analysis of all the available evidence, including the archaeological, one finds a distressing lack of concrete data in their discussions. Indeed, despite loudly insisting that archaeology has thoroughly “discredited” the biblical accounts, even when they appeal to archaeological evidence it is nearly always in vague generalizations, with little or no reference to primary or secondary sources. For example, Davies asserts, “Evidence of the process of settlement in the Judaeen highlands (which was a separate process from settlement in the highlands further north) makes it extremely difficult to conceive of the formation of a state until Iron IIB (900–800 BCE), and the formation of an empire of any size looks out of the question.”⁴⁸ Yet Davies does not offer a single piece of data, not even a reference to any secondary literature, to back up this conclusion. Similarly, Thompson’s discussion of the occupation of early Iron Age Benjamin and Judah states that “An extension of *Jerusalem*’s political influence southwards . . . is not clearly supported by the excavations of *Jerusalem* and the archaeological surveys of the Judaeen hills at any point earlier than the seventh-century B.C.” (italics original), without providing any details beyond a reference to one archaeological survey from 1967 to 1968.⁴⁹ In a later book, he does not refer to the primary or secondary literature at all, simply declaring, “In the real world of our chronology, only a few dozen very small scattered hamlets and villages supported farmers in all of the Judean highlands.”⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Davies, *In Search of “Ancient Israel,”* p. 67.

⁴⁹ Thompson, *Early History of the Israelite People*, p. 291; he cites M. Kochavi (ed.), *Judaea, Samaria, and the Golan: Archaeological Survey 1967–1968* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Karta, 1972), without even giving a page number.

⁵⁰ Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, p. 206; see also the similarly vague and unsupported assertions on pp. 204–209 and 214. There are almost no footnotes or explicit

Even Finkelstein and Silberman, who actually are archaeologists, simply state that the population was only “about five thousand people scattered among Jerusalem, Hebron, and about twenty small villages in Judah,” without explaining the justification for these estimates beyond a bibliographic reference to one discussion of the archaeological surveys.⁵¹ Thus, even when it comes to the archaeological evidence, which they claim offers the only secure basis upon which to build a genuine history of the Iron Age, they offer no sustained engagement with the sources, appealing only to a smattering of *survey* projects – when they appeal to anything at all – which (as we will see later) are themselves highly problematic.⁵²

- (4) Furthermore, even when there *is* concrete epigraphic evidence that confirms aspects of the biblical record, the minimalists attempt to dismiss or deny it. For instance, the Aramaic inscription from Tel Dan that mentions the “House of David,” and the possible appearance of the same expression also in the Mesha inscription from Moab strongly support the existence of David in historical reality. In order to maintain their theory that he was a literary figure invented in the late Persian-Hellenistic epoch, minimalists such as Thompson assert – without evidence – that the inscription is a forgery, or they attempt to read it as if it refers to the unknown temple of an otherwise unknown deity.⁵³ They also tendentiously

references to secondary literature in this entire book, just a two-and-a-half-page general bibliography (*ibid.*, pp. xvii–xix).

⁵¹ See Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, p. 143; as throughout the book, they do not include any notes or explicit reference to their sources in the text, except for a general chapter bibliography (*ibid.*, pp. 362–364), where they cite only one source regarding “the settlement patterns in Judah”: A. Ofer, “‘All the Hill Country of Judah’: From Settlement Fringe to a Prosperous Monarchy,” in I. Finkelstein and N. Na’aman (eds.), *From Nomadism to Monarchy: Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Early Israel* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1994), pp. 92–121. Ofer, however, gives no explicit estimate of the population of Judah; he finds eighteen sites in the Judean hill country from Iron Age I (which he dates to ca. the twelfth to the mid-eleventh centuries BCE) and 34 sites in Iron IIA (which he dates to the ca. mid-eleventh to the tenth centuries BCE) (*ibid.*, pp. 102–104). Thus, Ofer accepts the High Chronology, and states that “In general, Iron I-IIA constitutes the most significant breakthrough in the settlement history of the Judean Hills” (*ibid.*, pp. 102, 104). It is therefore unclear where the population estimate affirmed by Finkelstein and Silberman derives.

⁵² See Chapter Four §II, 3.

⁵³ Regarding the Tel Dan inscription, see for instance, Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, pp. 203–205, and the additional bibliographical references listed in Chapter Two, notes 12–13.

attribute the Siloam Tunnel inscription of King Hezekiah of Judah (eighth century BCE) to the Hasmonean period in the second century BCE.⁵⁴ They treat several other Hebrew and Assyrian royal inscriptions similarly.⁵⁵ Thus, whenever an original contemporary epigraphical document does not fit the revisionists' imaginative theories, they simply twist the historical record in such a way that it fits, while ignoring the basic context and the linguistic and paleographic facts of these discoveries. Perhaps they adopt – consciously or unconsciously – the dictum ascribed to Hegel: “If reality does not match the theory, so much the worse for reality.”⁵⁶

- (5) While all the minimalists dismiss the historical value of the biblical accounts of the United Monarchy, some of them go further and reject the diachronic development of the biblical literature in general, claiming that it was all composed in the Persian or Hellenistic periods. Thus Davies claims: “The literature itself was at least largely compiled into its present form, and at most almost entirely written, at a time later than this ‘biblical period’, during the rule of the Persians and then the Hellenistic monarchies.”⁵⁷ Similarly, Thompson claims that the stories of the United Monarchy are meant to support the aspirations of the Hasmonean dynasty in

⁵⁴ See P. R. Davies and J. W. Rogerson, “Was the Siloam Tunnel Built by Hezekiah?” *BA* 59 (1996), pp. 138–149; and the critical reviews such as: R. S. Hendel, “The Date of the Siloam Inscription: Rejoinder to Rogerson and Davies,” *BA* 59 (1996), pp. 233–237; and several other scholars in the framework of the Special Section “Defusing Pseudo-Scholarship: The Siloam Inscription Ain’t Hasmonean,” *BAR* 23/2 (1997), pp. 41–50, including: J. A. Hackett, “Spelling Differences and Letter Shape are Telltale Signs” (pp. 42–44); F. M. Cross, “Because They Cannot See a Difference, They Assert No One Can” (pp. 44–45); P. K. McCarter, Jr., “No Trained Epigraphist Would Confuse the Two” (pp. 45–46); A. Yardeni, “They would Change the Dates of Clearly Stratified Inscriptions: Impossible!” (p. 47); A. Lemaire, “Are We Prepared to Raze the Edifice?” (pp. 47–48); E. Eshel, “Some Paleographic Success Stories,” (pp. 48–49); A. Hurvitz, “Philology Recapitulates Paleography,” (pp. 49–50).

⁵⁵ See, for example, Oded, “The People of Israel in the Biblical Period: History or Myth?” pp. 27–28; Talshir, “Textual and Literary Criticism,” pp. 229–241; idem, “When Has the Bible Been Written?” pp. 19–20.

⁵⁶ “Wenn die Wirklichkeit [or Tatsachen] nicht mit der Theorie übereinstimmt, umso [or desto] schlimmer für die Wirklichkeit [or Tatsachen].” This saying is commonly attributed to G. W. F. Hegel, but he never published it, and it is cited in various forms, never with a specific reference, cf. e.g., F. Mauthner, *Wörterbuch der Philosophie: Neue Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache* (Zürich: Diogenes, 1910–1911; repr. 1980), vol. 1, p. 390.

⁵⁷ Davies, *In Search of “Ancient Israel,”* p. 24.

the second century BCE.⁵⁸ This is a major plank in their argument that the biblical texts are unreliable, but what is the concrete basis for such a late dating? Since they never discuss the texts in detail, they do not even *attempt* to demonstrate that these texts are Persian or Hellenistic, but simply assert that they are so.⁵⁹ They declare this without demonstrating any sign of late anachronism, such as the use of Persian or Greek loan words, allusions to later historical events, or any distinctively late ideas or names. They do not even admit any distinctions between the early and late biblical historiography, much less offer any actual discussion of their relation. All of it is simply flattened into a single period, ignoring the critical work of generations of biblical scholars. Thus, even when Davies admits that there probably *are* earlier sources behind at least some parts of the biblical text,⁶⁰ he still does not bother investigating what those sources might be or to what extent they even *could* be used to elucidate the history of the preexilic period. He simply asserts that, since the overall framing of this literature is from the Persian period or later, none of the individual materials it includes can be given any credence.⁶¹

This approach not only fails to deal in detail with the sources that they so cavalierly dismiss, but also ignores the fact that it is precisely in this matter that the early and late biblical historiographies strongly contrast with one another. The Chronicler *is* from the Persian period, and does indeed take a firm hand with his sources in order to produce a consistent and unified narrative that supports a theological or ideological message directed at his own postexilic community.⁶² But the editors of Samuel-Kings, while shaped by their own theologies and ideologies, have *not* taken

⁵⁸ See, e.g., Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, pp. 206–209.

⁵⁹ For example, Thompson asserts, “The stories of the golden age of the United Monarchy reflect the fantasy and ambitions of Jerusalem of the Maccabees” (*The Mythic Past*, p. 207, repeated on pp. 208–209), without mentioning a single anachronistic detail of the text that demands a Hasmonean context to justify such a bold assertion and extremely late dating.

⁶⁰ Davies, *In Search of “Ancient Israel,”* p. 94.

⁶¹ Davies, *In Search of “Ancient Israel,”* p. 35.

⁶² See especially I. Kalimi, *Zur Geschichtsschreibung des Chronisten: Literarisch-historiographische Abweichungen der Chronik von ihren Paralleltexten in den Samuel- und Königsbüchern*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 226 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1995); idem, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*.

the same approach. On the contrary, one finds in the Deuteronomistic History not a wholesale retelling of Israel's history, but rather a weaving together of various sources through editorial linkages and the occasional added speeches, prayers, or comments.⁶³ Though the overarching structure of the Deuteronomistic History may well reflect editing in the late monarchic and exilic periods, the individual stories and sources that it combines were by no means all created at that point, as we will see in detail concerning various aspects of the Solomon material in later chapters. Scholars can legitimately disagree about just how early those sources are, whether or how they may have developed, and in what ways, but to simply reject the entire project and assign everything without distinction to a later period – without even discussing its details – is neither responsible nor convincing. Since the main focus of the present volume is to demonstrate such differentiated use of sources and editorial techniques between the early and late biblical accounts of Solomon, no more need be said on this point here (see the discussion especially in [Chapters Five, Nine, Eleven, and Thirteen](#)).

- (6) The minimalists ignore or deny the diachronic linguistic differences between the various biblical texts. For instance, the assertion of Knauf (which other minimalists embrace without hesitation) that “Biblical Hebrew is not the language of 10th–6th centuries BCE,”⁶⁴ but rather is a *static* and artificial language invented in the Persian period, is extremely speculative. This simply ignores the enormous linguistic differences between different books (and even passages) of the Hebrew Bible. The further hypothesis of the minimalists that the Jewish scribes of the Persian period were trained with two distinct Hebrew dialects, and composed diverse biblical books in both of these simultaneously, is without foundation. In truth, careful philological examinations of the biblical (and epigraphical) texts demonstrate clear-cut *diachronic* development in the biblical Hebrew language: There are clear distinctions

⁶³ See [Chapter Two, §III, 1](#) and, especially, [Chapters Five, Ten, and Eleven](#).

⁶⁴ “‘Biblisch-Hebräisch’ keine Sprache des 10. bis 6. Jh.s v. Chr. ist,” see E. A. Knauf, “‘War ‘Biblisch-Hebräisch’ eine Sprache? Empirische Gesichtspunkte zur linguistischen Annäherung an die Sprache der althebräischen Literatur,” *ZAH* 3 (1990), pp. 11–23, esp. p. 23. For more recent critiques of Late Biblical Hebrew by Ian Young, Robert Rezetko, and Martin Ehrensverd, see the bibliography in S. E. Fassberg, “What is Late Biblical Hebrew,” *ZAW* 128 (2016), pp. 1–15, esp. p. 9, note 40.

between the preexilic Early / Classical Biblical Hebrew and the postexilic Late Biblical Hebrew – in vocabulary, syntax, orthography, and style.⁶⁵ The language of Samuel-Kings is Early Biblical Hebrew, which was used long before the Persian period (539–330 BCE), and is closely paralleled by the Hebrew and Moabite inscriptions that have been found from the First Temple period.⁶⁶ By contrast, the language of books such as Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah and Esther is Late Biblical Hebrew, which is characterized by substantial Aramaic influences and contains Persian names, words, and terms, and boasts substantial links with postbiblical Hebrew literature from Qumran, Masada, and elsewhere. These texts also refer explicitly to Persian-period events, which the earlier biblical literature does not.⁶⁷

Knauf, however, attempts to isolate Biblical Hebrew from all other Semitic languages of the ancient Near East, treating it as an artificial construct, while ignoring its many links to other Semitic languages, which also developed over time. Further, as Ian Young stresses, Knauf fails to distinguish between high literary Hebrew and administrative receipts found among the epigraphic data, as well as between various dialects which existed in the Land of Israel in the preexilic period, apart from the standard literary Hebrew: “The difference is genre, not wholesale rewriting of the Biblical text.”⁶⁸

- (7) Regarding Auld’s theory of a “common inherited source,” it is very hard to accept that the Chronicler’s source(s) lacked the unparalleled material in Samuel-Kings. On the contrary, the likelihood that the Chronicler relied on something very close to the existing

⁶⁵ Cf. Kalimi, “Kings *with* Privilege,” p. 507. See also especially the works of A. Kropat, R. Polzin, and A. Hurvitz, among many others. For detailed bibliographical references on the works of these and other scholars, see I. Kalimi, *The Books of Chronicles: A Classified Bibliography*, Simor Bible Bibliography 1 (Jerusalem: Simor, 1990), pp. 66–72, item nos. 303–362, as well as: A. Hurvitz, “The Recent Debate on Late Biblical Hebrew: Solid Data, Experts’ Opinions, and Inconclusive Arguments,” *Hebrew Studies* 47 (2006), pp. 191–210; Fassberg, “What is Late Biblical Hebrew,” pp. 9–10.

⁶⁶ See, for example, J. C. L. Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions Vol. 1: Hebrew and Moabite Inscriptions*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), pp. 7, 22, 27.

⁶⁷ See Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, p. 1, note 3; idem, “The Date of the Book Chronicles,” *An Ancient Israelite Historian*, p. 41, note 1; Fassberg, “What is Late Biblical Hebrew,” p. 10.

⁶⁸ See I. Young, *Diversity in Pre-Exilic Hebrew*, *Forschungen zum Alten Testament* 5 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1993), pp. 203–205, esp. p. 205.

“biblical” books of Samuel-Kings is evident not only from his repetition of many passages in Samuel-Kings, occasionally word for word, but also from many indications that he did in fact know the texts he omitted. In most cases, it is evident that the Chronicler would have had strong motivations for these omissions, which generally stand at odds with his theological convictions.⁶⁹ At the same time, the assumption of a supposed “common source (/ text / *Vorlage*)” that did not survive is speculative and problematic, and offers no viable alternative to the nearly universally accepted theory that the Chronicler used Samuel-Kings as his *Vorlage*. Indeed, except for a handful of Auld’s students, his thesis has not been accepted by the vast majority of the scholarly community.⁷⁰ As we will see in subsequent chapters, also in the case of Solomon’s birth, rise and construction of the Temple, there are many indications that the versions of these stories in Chronicles are secondary to those found in Samuel-Kings, and that the historical value and compositional methods of these two works differ substantially.

- (8) The most basic problem with the minimalist / revisionist paradigm is the lack of any consistent methodology. While its proponents *claim* to be adhering to a simple and reasonable method, building their history only on verifiable archaeological data and epigraphical sources contemporary with the events described,⁷¹ their actual reconstructions belie this. Thus, they create a model of the history of what they call “Palestine” that almost entirely ignores the biblical text in favor of archaeological findings, yet even their use of archaeological evidence is often superficial and selective. Further, not only are the biblical texts dismissed *en masse*, but even when there are *archaeological* findings that support particular aspects of the text (such as the Shishak, Mesha, and Tel Dan Inscriptions), these too are dismissed.⁷² Thus, while claiming to

⁶⁹ For examples, see especially Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 85–98.

⁷⁰ See Kalimi, “Kings with Privilege,” pp. 503–516.

⁷¹ Cf., for instance, Thompson, *Early History of the Israelite People*, p. 111, “This is not to deny all historical relevance and historicity to this biblically derived historiographical body of literature . . . I wish, rather, to stress the need for corroborating historical evidence, either in sources independent of the specific tradition, or, minimally, from a context contemporary with the tradition’s formation.”

⁷² See, e.g., Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, pp. 11–15 (dismissing the historical value of the Mesha Inscription) and pp. 203–205 (dismissing the Tel Dan Inscription). On the latter,

offer a more objective and reasonable reconstruction of history than those of the mainstream, all they are really doing is selectively rewriting history based on whatever they can find that supports their agenda, with no detailed analysis of the full range of evidence.

This is not just true of the stories of the United Monarchy. It is even true of the later Persian and Hellenistic periods to which they attempt to date the bulk of the Bible. For instance, Lester Grabbe notes the inconsistency of Thompson's refusal to lend any historical credence to ideologically motivated stories such as those in Samuel-Kings because, Thompson claims, they were composed only centuries later. Yet Thompson himself refers at a number of points to the conquests of Alexander the Great, even though virtually all our information about *him* also derives from ideologically motivated literary texts composed centuries after he lived.⁷³ Likewise, Thompson on the one hand dismisses the historical value of 1–2 Maccabees and Josephus' writings, but on the other hand relies on them extensively (usually without saying so) in reconstructing the history of Hellenistic Judaism.⁷⁴ Indeed, Grabbe even goes so far as to conclude that "T[hompson]'s reading of 1 and 2 Maccabees, Josephus, and the like . . . [gives] the strong impression that his discussion is not based on primary sources at all but on his interpretation of a *secondary* source, probably an older one, and I am not sure he is even aware of the sources on which the history of that period is based."⁷⁵ Given that this is precisely the period to which Thompson wishes to date the entire biblical literature, this is simply shocking. Yet the fact remains that *any* reconstruction of history, whether in the Hellenistic period

see further, Lemche and Thompson, "Did Biran Kill David?" pp. 3–22, and see [Chapter Two, §1](#).

⁷³ See Grabbe, "Hat die Bibel doch recht?" pp. 128–129; Grabbe further notes the troubling irony of Thompson's apparently poor knowledge of the Hellenistic period more generally: "For one who wants to date the Bible to the Hellenistic period or later, T. makes some surprising errors about this period, and I have the distinct impression that his errors relating to Second Temple Judaism are often those of ignorance rather than oversight" (p. 123). Thompson summarizes the conquests of Alexander in *The Mythic Past*, p. 196, without citing any sources.

⁷⁴ See Grabbe, "Hat die Bibel doch recht?" p. 126–127.

⁷⁵ Grabbe, "Hat die Bibel doch recht?" p. 126, referring especially to Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, pp. 196–199. Grabbe also states that "When T. says that Josephus 'knows almost nothing about 'the past' that we ourselves do not already know from other sources' (p. 10 [of *The Mythic Past*]), he simply does not know what he is talking about" (*ibid.*, pp. 123–124).

or in the tenth century BCE, has to rely on the critical evaluation of all the sources, even those with evident ideological bias. To dismiss the literary sources out of hand, while relying on an overly selective presentation of the archaeological evidence, is not sophistication, but mere tendentiousness. The real work of historical reconstruction remains to be done.

V. CONCLUSION

This chapter has found it necessary to clear the air, by critically examining recent dismissals of the very plausibility of a United Monarchy resembling that described in the Hebrew Bible. Each of the arguments reviewed here has been repeatedly raised by various revisionist / minimalist scholars – often without bothering to cite the evidence explicitly – yet each distorts the facts in order to support a simplistic dismissal of the biblical accounts, without dealing in sufficient detail with the texts themselves in all their complexity.

These scholars make great effort to destroy the history of Israel in the biblical period, not only by challenging some of its details, but also by shaking its major columns, central framework, and continuous chronological outline, which is mainly based on the Hebrew Bible (synthesized with some epigraphical and archaeological materials). In the most extreme cases, such scholars declare that the entire biblical corpus has been *written* (not just compiled or edited) in the Persian or even Hellenistic periods.⁷⁶ At that time, Judean scribes are said to have invented ancient Israel, that is, the whole history of the biblical period. The Revisionist/minimalist scholars even deny the existence and diachronic development of the Biblical Hebrew language in the tenth to the sixth century BCE, and ignore all the parallels between the biblical literature and a host of other ancient Near Eastern sources. These scholars twist or dismiss out of hand the contemporary original epigraphical material, wherever it supports the biblical accounts. Using the disputed archaeological finds selectively, they base themselves on very speculative and problematic archaeological surveys. At least some of them presuppose that *all* biblical accounts of the United Monarchy are purely imaginary stories, and therefore ahistorical and unreliable. Instead, these

⁷⁶ Most likely, they stop in the Hellenistic period because several biblical manuscripts of the Dead Sea Scrolls are dated to that period!

revisionist scholars either offer no alternative “history” of ancient Israel at all, or they advance suggestions based on highly selective readings of a few sources in accordance with their own baseless assumptions and artificial reconstructions. However, their deconstruction of the Bible from itself as well as their own fanciful reconstructions are unsupported by appropriate scholarly methods. These reconstructions are built on unprovable hypothetical arguments, which are wrapped up in modern terminology, but still lack any fundamental direct attestation. Thus revisionist scholars create an entirely new narrative that is *nowhere* affirmed in any ancient literature or finds, while ignoring all the accounts from the ancient world that actually have been preserved.

The rejection of this evidence by the minimalists / revisionists is not a product of careful methodology, professional research, and appropriate scepticism, but simply a baseless dismissal of anything that might possibly support the historical reliability of the biblical texts concerning the ancient Israelite United Monarchy. No wonder, therefore, that these conclusions have sparked sharp responses from several scholars. To cite just a few: Anson F. Rainey harshly criticizes Davies’ *In Search of “Ancient Israel,”* and concludes, “It is not in the power of late twentieth-century skeptics to dismiss this testimony [1 Kgs 4:7–19] with the wave of a sarcastic hand. To conclude, Davies’ book deserves to be forgotten.”⁷⁷ Bustenai Oded ends his review of Thompson’s *The Mythic Past*, with the words: “This book does not deserve any review or critics . . . it contains a mass of speculations, gut-feelings [סברות כרס] and tendentious fictions.”⁷⁸ William G. Dever notes “that the ‘revisionist’ ignorance or deliberate abuse of archaeology must not be allowed to go unchallenged.”⁷⁹ Zipora Talshir states that “the minimalists have no methods and no systematic doctrines,” and she ends another article as follows: “Classical study of the matter itself is neglected in favor of matters which are at the best relevant tangentially and contribute to the issue only in an artificial way.”⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Rainey, “Uncritical Criticism,” p. 103.

⁷⁸ Oded, “The People of Israel in the Biblical Period: History or Myth?” p. 32.

⁷⁹ W. G. Dever, “Biblical and Syro-Palestinian Archaeology: A State-of-the Art Assessment at the Turn of the Millenium,” *CurBS* 8 (2000), pp. 91–116, esp. p. 106.

⁸⁰ Talshir, “When Has the Bible Been Written?” p. 29–30; idem, “Textual and Literary Criticism,” p. 251. In addition, see also §IV, (4), [note 54](#), regarding the sharp critical reaction of several scholars to Davies’s and Rogerson’s dating of the Siloam inscription to the Hasmonean period.

Thus, it is time to reject altogether such “uncritical critics” of the revisionist / minimalist approach from the academic agenda, once and for all, and return to the much more fruitful, methodologically verified, and scholarly investigation of the historical evidence *as a whole*, through cautious and critical comparison, not a blanket dismissal.

CHAPTER 4

Solomon's Kingdom

Historical Evaluation and Case Studies

I. HISTORICAL EVALUATION

In [Chapter Three](#), I described and criticized the approaches of the deconstructionists who base their negation of the very existence of the United Monarchy on a negation of the biblical texts, an uncritical acceptance of problematic archaeological surveys, sharply disputed interpretations of the excavated remains, and their own unverifiable “modern” presuppositions and reconstructions. In contrast, when I occasionally discuss the historicity of some issues in this volume, I take another direction altogether: I carefully and meticulously evaluate the plausibility of the texts regarding David's and Solomon's reigns that we *actually* have. I attempt to isolate some potentially contemporaneous material that may survive within the books of Samuel-Kings, and try to correlate and understand the biblical texts against the background of the surrounding ancient Near Eastern literary and cultural context, of which the ancient Israelites' history, culture, and language are part and parcel. Of course, in such a process I also seriously consider the epigraphical finds and results of archaeological excavations, in the Land of Israel and its neighbors, that may help to understand and evaluate the historicity of the biblical texts.

One may agree or disagree with the plausibility of particular details, but one must carefully evaluate and critically consider the ancient accounts that have actually survived. No reasonable scholar claims that the accounts of the United Monarchy are perfectly accurate or without ideological bias. They must still be evaluated on a case-by-case basis in light of all available evidence. But these accounts provide good grounds for giving them the benefit of the doubt in our attempts to reconstruct a picture of

Solomon and his period. And in the end, they remain the only explicit evidence we have.¹ As J. J. M. Roberts correctly stresses,

Finkelstein pretends that one can simply ignore these literary documents [i.e., Samuel-Kings, First Isaiah, and the Zion Psalms], since they have not been preserved as inscriptions contemporary with the events they describe. He wants to rewrite Israel's history simply on the basis of contemporary archaeological remains. Indeed, he excoriates other archaeologists as methodologically flawed if they allow these documents the slightest influence on their archaeological judgments. However, these literary documents cannot be ignored in any serious reconstruction of Israelite history.²

Roberts notes that approaches that deny any existence or significance to the United Monarchy ignore the relative accuracy of the accounts in Samuel-Kings where we *do* have outside attestation. These approaches also obscure the stark linguistic, stylistic, and theological differences between these texts and those that unambiguously derive from the exilic and postexilic periods,³ and they overlook the fact that the obvious apologetic thrust of the narratives in Samuel-Kings “is directed against persons and to situations that no longer constituted any threat to anyone in the later period to which they [i.e., the minimalists] assign the composition of these narratives.”⁴

As we saw in [Chapter Two](#), at least some of the biblical materials are shaded with editorial, ideological, and theological coloring, and some include legendary material and late additions. Each of the biblical compositions focused on in this volume – Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles – has unique purposes, theological presuppositions, methods of history-writing, language, and style. However, in Samuel-Kings, neither the Deuteronomistic passages in the story of Solomon, nor the occasional anachronisms, internal contradictions, inaccurate statements, or legendary accretions, can support a blanket dismissal of the very existence of King Solomon and his main activities, as attested to by the early biblical

¹ For details of my approach on how to handle the biblical sources, see [Chapter One](#), §III.

² See J. J. M. Roberts, “Solomon's Jerusalem and Zion Tradition,” in A. Vaughn and A. E. Killebrew (eds.), *Jerusalem in Bible and Archaeology: The First Temple Period* (Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series 18; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), pp. 163–170, esp. p. 169.

³ This point is also emphasized by R. E. Friedman, “Solomon and the Great Histories,” in A. Vaughn and A. E. Killebrew (eds.), *Jerusalem in Bible and Archaeology: The First Temple Period* (Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series 18; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), pp. 171–172; see also [Chapter Three](#), §IV.

⁴ See Roberts, “Solomon's Jerusalem and Zion Tradition,” p. 169.

records these books preserve. As demonstrated in [Chapter Three](#), the doubts voiced by the minimalists about the overall credibility of the biblical historiography as a whole, particularly in Samuel-Kings, are unfounded, but that does not mean one can or should simply accept the biblical record without question. Just like raw archaeological material, the biblical sources must be critically evaluated and carefully interpreted – as this volume shows – but they offer the only explicit information on Solomon preserved from the ancient world. They must therefore stand at the center of any discussion of this king and his reign. There is no reason to dismiss *a priori* the possibility that some genuine historical information has been preserved in these documents about Solomon's birth, rise, and reign, even if it may be debated just how much. In fact, apart from the most extreme minimalists such as Davies, Lemche, and Thompson, even most of those who question the reliability of the biblical accounts still accept that Solomon existed, and merely debate the nature of his kingdom and activities.⁵

These characteristics of the biblical and extrabiblical sources concerning Solomon dictate the content, features, and boundaries of any reasonable historical description of this king and his time. It goes without saying that they make the task of a modern historian extremely complicated and difficult, but they do not make it impossible. The challenges presented by such reconstructions must not lead us to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Though the interpretation of the biblical and archaeological material regarding Solomon and his reign is controversial in contemporary scholarship,⁶ there is accumulating evidence that could illuminate the extent and character of an Israelite kingdom in the tenth century BCE.

⁵ See, for example, Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, pp. 128–130, and even Knauf and Guillaume, *A History of Biblical Israel*, pp. 63–64; see also, recently, Frevel, *Geschichte Israels*, p. 148; W. Dietrich, “David and the Philistines: Literature and History,” in G. Galil et al. (eds.), *The Ancient Near East in the 12th–10th Centuries BCE: Culture and History, Proceedings of the International Conference Held at the University of Haifa, 2–5 May, 2010*, *Alter Orient und Altes Testament* 392 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2012), pp. 79–98, esp. p. 98; L. L. Grabbe, “The Mighty Men of Israel: 1–2 Samuel and Historicity,” in W. Dietrich et al. (eds.), *The Books of Samuel: Stories – History – Reception History*, *Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium* 284 (Leuven: Peeters, 2016), pp. 83–104.

⁶ In addition to the bibliography cited in this and previous chapters, see also, for example, the descriptions of Solomon's reign by M. Noth, *The History of Israel* (trans. S. Godman; London: A. & C. Black, 1959), pp. 203–223; J. Bright, *A History of Israel*, 4th ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), pp. 211–228; B. Mazar, “The Time of David and Solomon,” in A. Malamat (ed.), *The History of the Jewish People: The Age of the Monarchies – Volume I: Political History* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Am Oved and

II. CASE STUDIES

The purpose of this discussion is not to offer a comprehensive reconstruction of the historical Solomon and his reign. However, in order to illustrate my approach and methods, the following four examples are considered, regarding Solomon's Temple, Jerusalem under David and Solomon, the size of their kingdom, and Solomon's harem.

1. *The Historicity of Solomon's Temple*

Three basic approaches can be highlighted regarding the historicity of Solomon's Temple:

- (1) Those who deny the very existence of King Solomon, such as Lemche and Thompson, as discussed in [Chapter Three](#), therefore obviously also deny that Solomon built a Temple. Likewise, some who accept that Solomon lived, such as Finkelstein and Silberman, deny that any monumental construction in Jerusalem can be attributed to him, claiming that no sign of it has been unearthed.⁷ But this argument from silence fails, because the site of the Temple in Jerusalem has never been (and most likely also never will be) properly excavated, due to political and religious sensitivities. Moreover, even if the site were to be excavated sometime in the future, "it is very unlikely that any sealed Iron Age layers

Alexander Pelie, 1982), pp. 62–81, esp. p. 74–80; A. Malamat, *Israel in Biblical Times: Historical Essays* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute and Israel Exploration Society, 1983), pp. 167–222; Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, pp. 81–158, and see also the review by B. A. Levine in *RB* 112 (2005), pp. 267–273, esp. p. 269 (where he declares: "I agree with Kitchen's basic reconstruction of the period of the Judges, and of the early monarchy, of the reigns of Saul, David and Solomon"); Knoppers, "The Vanishing Solomon," pp. 19–44; G. Hentschel, "Auf der Suche nach dem geschichtlichen Salomo," in R. Lux (ed.), *Ideales Königtum: Studien zu David und Salomo*, Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte 16 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2005), pp. 91–105; A. E. Gardner, "The Narratives of Solomon's Reign in the Light of the Historiography of other Ancient Civilizations," *ABR* 56 (2008), pp. 1–18.

⁷ See Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, p. 133; cf. also D. Ussishkin, "Solomon's Jerusalem: The Text and the Facts on the Ground," in A. G. Vaughn and A. E. Killebrew (eds.), *Jerusalem in Bible and Archaeology: The First Temple Period*, Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series 18 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), pp. 103–115, esp. pp. 112–114, who is also skeptical of the likelihood of monumental structures on the Temple Mount in the tenth century, but leaves the matter open for historians to discuss, since the archaeological material is insufficient.

connected to Solomon's Temple or palace will be found at this spot, because of the many destructions caused by the Babylonians, the Romans and the Crusaders," as well as the Muslims.⁸ Furthermore, after the enormous reconstruction of the Temple Mount by Herod the Great (37–4 BCE), the chance is low that any significant remains from Solomon's period have survived.

Besides, if David and Solomon really did exist, then the fact that the construction of the Temple was *not* attributed to the dynastic founder, David – a fact which the tradition goes to great lengths to justify and explain, particularly in 2 Samuel 7 (see also 1 Kgs 5:16–19 [ET, 5:2–5]; 1 Chr 22:7–10; 29:1–10) – provides strong circumstantial support for the likelihood that it was constructed only after David's death. Further, since it is indisputable that a Temple existed in Jerusalem throughout the rest of the Judean monarchy, and *no* ancient source attributes its construction to any later king, but only and always to Solomon, there is every reason to accept that this reflects a genuine historical kernel.

- (2) Other scholars who seek to minimize the significance of the United Monarchy acknowledge that a Temple probably existed in tenth-century BCE Jerusalem, but claim that Solomon simply renovated it, rather than building it himself. This theory was presented by Konrad Rupprecht,⁹ and has recently been embraced by Knauf and Guillaume, who assert that "The building report in 1 Kings 6 deals *with the decoration of an existing temple*, which indicates that Solomon introduced the Judean and Israelite tribal deity YHWH, next to one of the Jerusalemite gods, El or Amon (1 Kgs 8:12–13 LXX), into *the pre-existing temple*" (italics mine).¹⁰ There is no basis for this conclusion, however, which simply misreads

⁸ W. Zwickel, "Solomon's Temple, Its Cultic Implements and the Historicity of Solomon's Kingdom," in P. James and P. G. van der Veen (eds.), *Solomon and Shishak: Current Perspectives from Archaeology, Epigraphy, History and Chronology*, BAR International Series 2732 (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 2015), pp. 148–154, esp. p. 148. See also [Chapter Two](#), §II and [Chapter Thirteen](#), note 1.

⁹ K. Rupprecht, *Der Tempel von Jerusalem: Gründung Salomos oder jebusitisches Erbe?*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 144 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1977). However, as Cogan (1 Kings, p. 252, note 6) stresses, "Rupprecht's highly speculative thesis . . . discounts the unanimous view of all biblical texts concerning the originality of Solomon's undertaking."

¹⁰ See Knauf and Guillaume, *A History of Biblical Israel*, p. 78; similarly, E. A. Knauf, "Jerusalem in the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages: A Proposal," *Tel Aviv* 27 (2000), pp. 75–90.

1 Kings 6. The latter does *not* merely describe the decoration of an existing Temple, but states explicitly that Solomon “built” (בנה) the Temple (1 Kgs 6:1–3, 7, 9, 14), that he installed windows (6:4), that he “built” (בנה) a structure against the wall and side chambers all around (6:5, cf. 10), that he “built” (בנה) a cedar structure within the Temple, for the inner sanctum (6:15–17), *as well as* installing extensive decorations and furnishings (6:18–38). It is unreasonable to accept the chapter’s account of Solomon’s decorations, but not its explicit references to his constructions, and it is inaccurate to claim that 1 Kings 6 describes only the former, when it explicitly describes both. Though בנה can also mean “rebuild,” particularly when describing something that has been destroyed or damaged,¹¹ it regularly describes the construction of something new (e.g., Gen 4:17; 8:20; 11:4–5; 1 Kgs 2:36; 3:1–2; 5:17, 19, 32 [ET, 5:3, 5, 18]; 7:1; Ps 127:1). For instance, בנה is used elsewhere in 1 Kings to affirm that no Temple had been “built,” such as in 1 Kings 3:2, רק העם מזבחים בבמות כי לא-נבנה בית לשם יהוה עד הימים ההם, “The people were still sacrificing at the high places, because no house had yet been *built* for the name of the Lord.” Regardless of the historical accuracy of the statement, it assumes that בנה means “built,” not “renovated.” Moreover, if indeed Solomon only reconstructed an existing Jebusite Temple, why did he need a host of people, and a tremendous amount of stone and wood from Lebanon, and why did it take six years to complete (1 Kgs 5:29–32 [ET, 5:15–18]; 6:37–38)? Even if these details are considered exaggerated or legendary (e.g., the very large number of the workers, 1 Kgs 5:29 [ET, 5:15]), their description presupposes that the author(s) considered the building to be a new construction.

In another place, Knauf attempts to support his approach by pointing to the reference in 2 Samuel 12:20 to David going to בית יהוה (“the House of the Lord”), which he interprets to mean

¹¹ See, for example, Josh 6:26; Ezek 36:36; Amos 9:14; see L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament: Study Edition*, trans. and ed., M. E. J. Richardson (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2001), vol. 1, pp. 777–778, esp. 139 (though the primary meaning of the verb is “to build”); cf. E. L. Greenstein, “Methodological Principles in Determining that the So-Called Jehoash Inscription is Inauthentic,” in M. J. Lundberg, S. Fine, and W. T. Pitard (eds.), *Puzzling Out the Past: Studies in Northwest Semitic Languages and Literatures in Honor of Bruce Zuckerman*, Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 55 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2012), pp. 83–92, esp. p. 89, with examples from the Mesha inscription and elsewhere.

that a Temple already existed in Jerusalem before Solomon, which David just converted to the Israelite God.¹² But this does not necessarily follow from the biblical text. There are explicit references to David placing the Ark of the Covenant in the “tent” he erected especially for it (2 Sam 6:17; cf. 7:2). If David had converted the Jebusite temple to the Lord’s Temple, why did he not bring the Ark there instead of erecting a special tent for it? In fact, this tent is also mentioned in 1 Kings 2:28–29, as אהל יהוה (“the Tent of the Lord”), where Joab fled and held the horns of the altar.¹³ In addition, following the erection of the Temple by Solomon, “they brought up the Ark of the Lord and the Tent of Meeting and all the holy vessels that were *in the Tent*” (1 Kgs 8:4; and cf. 2 Sam 7:2). Note, this text probably distinguishes between “the Tent” that was erected by David and “the Tent of Meeting,” but in any case, it implies that there was no solid Yahwistic Temple building in Jerusalem until Solomon constructed one.

Moreover, there is precedent for referring to a tent as the “House of the Lord.” For example, 1 Samuel 1:7, 24; 3:15 use the term בית יהוה (“House of the Lord”; in Judg 18:31, בית האלהים, and Judg 18:31, בית האלהים, and 1 Sam 1:9; 3:3) for the sanctuary at Shiloh; while elsewhere the biblical text refers to the same sanctuary simply as the “Tent of Meeting” (1 Sam 2:22).¹⁴ In Psalms 78:60 this sanctuary is named אהל and appears parallel to ויש משכן שלו / אהל שכן באדם: משכן (“He abandoned his dwelling at Shiloh / the tent where he dwelt among mortals” (or: “in [the place named] Adam”).¹⁵ Moreover, the terms אהל, משכן, and בית appear in parallel in the biblical literature. Thus, for instance, in Numbers 16:26–27, 32, Moses asks the Israelites: סורו נא מעל אהלי האנשים הרשעים האלה (“Turn away from the tents of these wicked men”; 16:26); the following verse says that the

¹² Knauf, “Jerusalem in the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages,” p. 78.

¹³ Though the MT 1 Kgs 1:50 recounts that Adonijah fled and held the horns of the altar, without mentioning the Tent, the Lucianic recension of the Septuagint and some Vulgate manuscripts have here also “in the Tent of the Lord.” Either this reflects an ancient Hebrew *Vorlage*, or it was added due to the parallel in 2:28–29.

¹⁴ On the absence of this reference in Manuscript B of the LXX, and 4QSam^a, see McCarter, *1 Samuel*, p. 81.

¹⁵ For a critique of the idea that באדם in Ps 78:60 refers to a city where the Tabernacle was once located, see Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 145–146, note 63.

Israelites did so: ויעלו מעל משכן קרה דתן ואבירם ("So they got away from the *dwelling*s of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram"); and finally in verse 32 we read: ותפתח הארץ את פיה ותבלע אתם ואת בתיהם ("The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, along with *their house* ").

Alternatively, it is possible that the term בית יהוה in these texts is anachronistic and could have been used by an author or editor at any point from Solomon's period on. The use of an anachronistic term, however, does not demonstrate that the act itself was anachronistic. That is, David could have actually visited the Tent where he had placed the Ark, which was then anachronistically referred to as the "House of the Lord." Either way, there is no reason to conclude from this one reference that the Temple predated Solomon.

That said, I am not denying the possibility of a pre-Solomonic Jebusite sanctuary in Jerusalem. The city and people predate David, and certainly would have had a sanctuary of their own, though no biblical text refers to one. However, this does not detract from the likelihood that Solomon himself founded a new Temple for the Israelites, on a new site, outside the old city limits. Whether David himself planned for this, as Samuel-Kings and Chronicles emphasize, is debatable, but not implausible.

- (3) Most scholars basically accept that Solomon erected a temple, though it may certainly be debated to what extent the biblical descriptions of its dimensions, decorations, and wealth reflect the realities of Solomon's period.¹⁶ Here it is worthy to mention:
 - (a) The support from archaeological and iconographical viewpoints: For instance, Wolfgang Zwickel has assembled several reasonable arguments, including especially various archaeological parallels from the ancient Levant and Mesopotamia, for concluding that the Jerusalem Temple was most likely

¹⁶ See for example, V. A. Hurowitz, "Yhwh's Exalted House: Aspects of the Design and Symbolism of Solomon's Temple," in J. Day (ed.), *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel*, Library of Hebrew Bible / Old Testament Studies 422 (London: T&T Clark International, 2005), pp. 63–110, with extensive additional bibliography, and recently Frevel, *Geschichte Israels*, pp. 125–132.

For further bibliography, and an overview of three major approaches to the literary development of 1 Kings 5:15 [ET, 5:1]–9:9, see G. Galil, "Solomon's Temple: Fiction or Reality?" in G. Galil et al. (eds.), *The Ancient Near East in the 12th–10th Centuries BCE: Culture and History, Proceedings of the International Conference Held at the University of Haifa, 2–5 May, 2010*, Alter Orient und Altes Testament 392 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2012), pp. 137–148, esp. pp. 137–138.

constructed in the tenth century BCE.¹⁷ Victor A. Hurowitz also argues that the design and symbolism of the Temple, as described in the book of Kings, has many parallels across the ancient Near East.¹⁸ Without claiming that every detail of the descriptions in 1 Kings 6–7 must be precisely accurate, the overall floorplan and structure of Solomon’s Temple seems historically plausible for the period, given its architectural similarities with other contemporaneous temples found in the Levant, while a number of other details of the description are unlikely to have been added during the period of the divided monarchy.¹⁹

- (b) Hurowitz has also shown that the overall structure of the account of the Temple’s founding in 1 Kings 5–9 (despite its apparent combination of diverse sources), corresponds very closely with the typical structure of such reports across the ancient Near East.²⁰
- (c) Gershon Galil examines the biblical description of Solomon’s Temple in Kings in the light of ancient Near Eastern building stories, and concludes that it is reasonable that the “Temple was built in the days of Solomon, and the building story was composed by Solomon’s scribes: no king in the ancient Near East caused his scribes to compose a building story or inscription in honor of another king . . . it is even less conceivable that a king would build a temple or a palace and attribute it to one of his predecessors.”²¹ In contrast, Galil provides numerous examples of ancient Near Eastern kings who denigrate the temple-building activities of their predecessors in order to exalt their own. Therefore, the idea that a later king of Judah actually built the

¹⁷ See Zwickel, “Solomon’s Temple, Its Cultic Implements and the Historicity of Solomon’s Kingdom,” pp. 148–154. See also Knoppers, “The Vanishing Solomon,” p. 24, note 29.

¹⁸ Hurowitz, “Yhwh’s Exalted House: Aspects of the Design and Symbolism of Solomon’s Temple,” pp. 63–110.

¹⁹ Zwickel, “Solomon’s Temple, Its Cultic Implements and the Historicity of Solomon’s Kingdom,” pp. 150–151. For the wealth attributed to Solomon’s Temple and its use of a vast amount of gold, compare the ancient Near Eastern parallels noted by Millard, “The Case for King Solomon,” pp. 23–24.

²⁰ V. [A.] Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in the Light of Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic Writings*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 115 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), esp. pp. 106–110, 126, and 131–321.

²¹ Galil, “Solomon’s Temple: Fiction or Reality?” pp. 141–146, esp. p. 146.

Jerusalem Temple, and attributed it to Solomon, is not only unsupported by any biblical text, but also unparalleled in the ancient Near Eastern building accounts. One could also ask why, if a later king of Judah wished to attribute the Temple to a predecessor, would they not have attributed it to David, rather than Solomon? Instead, the emphasis in both the early and late biblical historiographies that David was unable to build the Temple, while Solomon did so, parallels many other ancient Near Eastern temple-building accounts that contrast the Temple builder with his predecessors.

- (d) Garfinkel and Madeleine Mumcuoglu claim that a building model that was unearthed in Khirbet Qeiyafa – which shows triglyphs and recessed doorframes – supports the biblical description of Solomon's palace and Temple.²² On the one hand, some scholars question the archaeological methodology and conclusions of Garfinkel, including the dating of this site and its affiliation with the Judahite / Israelite monarchy.²³ Others have stressed that similar models have been found elsewhere in the southern Levant – though those from Khirbet Qeiyafa are the earliest so far discovered – and therefore they cannot be taken as conclusive proof of the existence of Solomon's Temple specifically, though that possibility cannot be dismissed.²⁴ On the other hand, the very existence of this model might at least provide additional confirmation that the design of Solomon's Temple, as described in the biblical text, had contemporaneous precedent.

While not all the details of Solomon's Temple are likely to be verifiable,²⁵ the likelihood that he did in fact found a sanctuary on the Temple Mount

²² See Y. Garfinkel and M. Mumcuoglu, "Triglyphs and Recessed Doorframes on a Building Model from Khirbet Qeiyafa: New Light on Two Technical Terms in Biblical Descriptions of Solomon's Palace and Temple," *IEJ* 63 (2009), pp. 135–163; see also idem, *Solomon's Temple and Palace: New Archaeological Discoveries*, and their arguments against the minimalists, on pp. 15–24.

²³ See I. Finkelstein and A. Fantalkin, "Khirbet Qeiyafa: An Unsensational Archaeological and Historical Interpretation," *Tel Aviv* 39 (2012), pp. 38–63.

²⁴ See, for instance, Frevel, *Geschichte Israels*, pp. 125–132, esp. p. 131, though he still accepts that Solomon probably constructed, or at least renovated, a sanctuary of some type in Jerusalem.

²⁵ For the antiquity and possible originality of 1 Kgs 6:1, 37–38, see Kalimi, "Kings with Privilege," p. 512.

is very plausible, and should not be dismissed simply because we are unable to excavate there. The question, however, cannot be separated from a related one: Was tenth-century Jerusalem as a whole actually a royal capital – in which case we should expect it to have included a temple and palace of some kind – or merely a small village, as the minimalists frequently assert?

2. *Jerusalem under David and Solomon*

Some scholars attempt to contrast the biblical accounts of Solomon's Jerusalem with the meager archaeological findings recovered from the City of David, as though the latter contradicted the former. For example, David Ussishkin states, "The biblical text is the sole written source describing King Solomon's glorious reign and his capital, Jerusalem. *It presents Jerusalem of that time as a large and rich city*, befitting its role as the capital of a great and prosperous kingdom and king" (*italics mine*).²⁶ Though some biblical texts attribute vast wealth to Solomon (1 Kgs 6:28–35; 9:14, 28; 10:10–27), nothing is said about the precise size of Jerusalem. The text only attributes to Solomon the building of "the house of the Lord and his own house, the Millo and the wall of Jerusalem" (1 Kgs 9:15a; cf. also 11:27). Elsewhere the Temple and palace are described extensively (1 Kings 6–7), but nothing more is said concerning the precise size of Jerusalem itself, or its residential and administrative areas, and so on. Beyond these passages, there is only a notice that Solomon repaired the breaches in the City of David (1 Kgs 11:27), which probably had been left since its capture by David (2 Sam 5:6–8). In short, the portion of Jerusalem that Solomon is said to have developed was the Temple Mount and its surroundings, where the palace was also located. There is no reference in any text that Solomon expanded residential areas outside the City of David.

The only other indication of size is the passage in 1 Kings 11:1–3 that affirms that Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines, but – while it is

²⁶ Ussishkin, "Solomon's Jerusalem," p. 103. Gunnar Lehmann also claims that, "What was once viewed as a magnificent capital, displaying the splendor of the mighty united monarchy, is now challenged by some claiming that Jerusalem during the tenth century B.C.E. was no more than a village-like, small settlement"; G. Lehmann, "The United Monarchy in the Countryside: Jerusalem, Judah, and the Shephelah during the Tenth Century B.C.E.," in A. Vaughn and A. E. Killebrew (eds.), *Jerusalem in Bible and Archaeology: The First Temple Period*, Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series 18 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), pp. 117–162, esp. p. 117.

entirely likely that Solomon did have a large harem – those numbers are obviously exaggerated, and cannot be taken as credible evidence regarding the population of Jerusalem, as will be discussed further.²⁷ Also, the lists of David's and Solomon's officials are quite modest, naming fewer than a dozen each (2 Sam 8:17–18; 1 Kgs 4:2–6; this does not include Solomon's twelve provincial governors, who did not live in Jerusalem). How large a city is truly necessary to accommodate such an administration? Indeed, 1 Kings 9:23 refers to a far larger administration of 550 “chief officers” (שרי הנצבים), and 3,300 are mentioned in 5:30 [ET, 5:16], though these are not necessarily located in Jerusalem. However, as noted earlier, these numbers are exaggerated. Note, the parallel text of 1 Kings 9:23 speaks about 200 “chief officers” (2 Chr 8:10).

Thus, the biblical text itself does not demand that Solomon's Jerusalem be thought of as a great city on the scale of Nineveh or Babylon; the texts instead picture a modest, walled area on the southeastern hill (the City of David), attached to a newly built Temple and palace on the Temple Mount. This description of Jerusalem's size and fortifications is neither fantastic nor inherently implausible, and while the archaeological evidence available is partial and debatable, as discussed in [Chapter Two \(§II\)](#), it can be seen to be consistent with those biblical references.

Despite this, some scholars ignore the biblical accounts altogether, and deny the very existence of a city of Jerusalem in the tenth century BCE. For instance, Lemche and Thompson assert that “Jerusalem at this time *can hardly be spoken of as a city*. It was yet centuries from having the capacity of challenging any of the dozens of more powerful small autonomous towns of Palestine.”²⁸ Similarly, according to Finkelstein and Silberman, the excavations in Jerusalem

failed to provide significant evidence for a tenth century occupation. Not only was *any sign of monumental architecture missing*, but so were even simple pottery sherds. The types that are so characteristic of the tenth century at other sites are rare in Jerusalem. Some scholars have argued that later, massive building activities in Jerusalem wiped out all signs of the earlier city. Yet excavations in the City of David revealed impressive finds from the Middle Bronze Age and from later centuries of the Iron Age – just

²⁷ For Solomon's harem, see [§II, 4](#).

²⁸ Lemche and Thompson, “Did Biran Kill David?” p. 19. The same claims are repeated in Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, p. 206.

not from the 10th century BCE. The most optimistic assessment of this negative evidence is that tenth century Jerusalem was rather limited in extent, perhaps no more than a typical hill-country village (*italics added*).²⁹

This conclusion is highly dubious, illegitimately dismissing both the present impossibility of archaeologically confirming *or* denying the nature of Solomon's building projects on the Temple Mount, and underestimating the evidence of tenth-century occupation and building activities in the City of David. These matters have already been discussed in [Chapter Two, §II](#), and need not be repeated here, but it should at least be noted that Finkelstein and Silberman's assertion that we lack "even simple pottery sherds" from the tenth century, is simply untrue. As Jane Cahill emphasizes, tenth-century pottery has been found in Stratum 14 of the City of David, a stratum that includes the remains of several buildings both inside and outside the fortification wall.³⁰ Thus, while the archaeological investigations to date cannot yet confirm its full extent, the tenth-century city does appear to have been occupied, with notable building activity in the City of David, which – barring the present inaccessibility of excavation at the Temple Mount – is all that the biblical texts themselves affirm.

As for the objection that, even if Jerusalem was occupied, it was too small to be the center of an empire,³¹ it must be stressed that in the early Iron Age the administration of a large territorial dominion, such as that ascribed to David and Solomon in the biblical texts (e.g., 2 Sam 8:1–14; 1 Kgs 5:1 [ET, 4:21]), by no means required a massive capital along the lines of a Nineveh or Babylon. As Menachem Haran has already pointed out, before the Persian period, dominion over a large territory did not mean bureaucratic control, which would depend on a large court and

²⁹ Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, p. 133. Knauf goes so far as to affirm that, "Archaeologically, Jerusalem did not exist between the 17th and the 14th centuries nor in the 10th century (traditional chronology) B.C.E."; Knauf, "Jerusalem in the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages: A Proposal," p. 75. Yet he goes on to admit that, even though little remains have been discovered, some sort of city must nevertheless have been present (he suggests that it was largely confined to the Temple Mount), and concludes that "Jerusalem would have had less than 2000 inhabitants when David came to power" (*ibid.*, 79).

³⁰ Cahill, "Jerusalem at the Time of the United Monarchy," pp. 56–72. This is in addition to substantial fortifications that were preserved from the Late Bronze Age and apparently still in use throughout Iron Age I and IIA, such as the Gihon Spring and its guard towers, the Middle Bronze Age fortification wall (which was incorporated into the later Iron Age II wall), and possibly the stepped rampart, the construction of which Cahill dates in full to the twelfth century (*ibid.*, pp. 71–72).

³¹ See, for instance, Thompson, *Early History of the Israelite People*, pp. 331–332.

capital, but rather decisive military victory leading to tribute being paid by the local leaders – vassals – of the conquered or subjugated territories (cf. 2 Sam 8:2, 6, 14; 10:19; 1 Kgs 10:24–25). In that light, the size of Jerusalem cannot prove or disprove the size of the Davidic–Solomonic kingdom.³² Na'aman also notes that parallels can be found elsewhere in the ancient Near East, which illustrate that “in such a fluid situation, a talented and successful leader may conquer vast areas. It was not even necessary to have a permanent urban basis for such an achievement. The historical test is whether the conqueror and his heirs were able to keep the conquered areas and establish a permanent administration . . . There is nothing impossible about the account of David's conquests – the only problem is whether or not it really happened.”³³ In fact, even Finkelstein acknowledges parallel cases within the southern Levant itself, in which relatively large territories “were ruled from a modest settlement with no evidence of monumental buildings.”³⁴ Yet he accepts these as parallels only for the possibility of a pre-Omrade northern state, without considering that this undermines his objection to the historicity of the United Monarchy as well.

Additionally, Baruch Halpern suggests that the relatively small size of Jerusalem may even reflect “a deliberate policy of distancing domestic population from state centers.”³⁵ This is attested by the fact that the Iron

³² See M. Haran, “The Bible and Archaeology as Testimony for Israelite History,” [in Hebrew] *Beit Mikra* 176 (2004), pp. 31–46, esp. pp. 41–46.

³³ Na'aman, “Sources and Composition in the History of David,” p. 183; he mentions the kingdoms established by Yahdunlim, Shamshi-Addu, and Zimrilim in northern Mesopotamia in the late nineteenth to early eighteenth century BCE (*ibid.*, pp. 182–183). He concludes that the sources do not allow us to say definitively whether David's conquests happened or not, but this too seems overly skeptical.

³⁴ I. Finkelstein, “Stages in the Territorial Expansion of the Northern Kingdom,” *VT* 61 (2011), pp. 227–242, esp. pp. 234–235. In particular, he notes the example of Shechem, which was relatively small during the Amarna period, but still “ruled over the northern part of the central highlands, part of the Jordan Valley and possibly areas in the highlands to the east of the Jordan; its maneuvers, as recorded in the tablets, were aimed at expanding into the Jezreel Valley.” He goes on to name examples from a much later period also: “The nature of both Shechem of the Amarna period and Israel in the early Iron IIA can be described as an expanding, early territorial formation. Similar phenomena – of an emerging territorio-political entity ruled from a modest rural settlement in the highlands are known in the later history of the Levant, for instance in the case of Dhar el-Omar in the Lower Galilee and Fakhr ed-Din in the mountains of Lebanon” (*ibid.*, p. 235, with bibliography).

³⁵ B. Halpern, “The Construction of the Davidic State: An Exercise in Historiography,” in V. Fritz and P. R. Davies (eds.), *The Origins of the Ancient Israelite States*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 228 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press,

IIA monumental constructions in Megiddo (Strata VA-IVB) and Hazor (Strata X-IX) include public buildings and fortifications, but little increase in residential housing (which he calls “domestic architecture”).³⁶ Indeed, Ze’ev Herzog points out that this reflects a broader shift seen across the Iron Age II period: “The old order [in the Bronze Age] of a royal palace-court on the acropolis surrounded by large residential quarters was replaced by a hierarchy of administrative centers serving governmental needs. Consequently, the cities of the third urban phase [i.e., Iron Age II] were gradually filled up by non-residential structures, and vacated of most of their inhabitants.”³⁷ Volkmar Fritz also affirms that a number of Iron Age cities served primarily administrative rather than residential purposes, including Megiddo Stratum IVB.³⁸ Halpern argues that David’s selection of the non-Israelite city of Jerusalem as his capital is consistent with such a policy, as are Solomon’s administrative centers listed in 1 Kings 4:7–19, many of which were not traditionally Israelite (such as Beth-shemesh, Dor, Taanach, Megiddo, and Beth-shan).³⁹ The intent may to have been to limit the power of the traditional tribal leaders, by distancing the administrative centers from the population centers.⁴⁰ If that is so, then a relatively small capital in the city of David would not be proof of its unimportance, but instead a deliberate policy choice. That is, Jerusalem in the tenth century was not small because David’s

1996), pp. 44–75, esp. pp. 72–73. These arguments are expanded in his book, *David’s Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2001), pp. 211–222.

³⁶ Halpern, “The Construction of the Davidic State,” p. 73.

³⁷ Z. Herzog, *Archaeology of the City: Urban Planning in Ancient Israel and Its Social Implications*, Tel Aviv University Sonia and Marco Nadler Institute of Archaeology Monograph Series 13 (Jerusalem: Emery and Claire Yass Archaeology Press, 1997), p. 276, cf. pp. 211–220 and 275–277. Despite this general conclusion, however, Herzog follows the Low Chronology, and claims regarding Megiddo that this process began after Solomon, while in the tenth century, “Most of the area exposed inside the city is occupied by residential units,” likely making up approximately 75% of the area (*ibid.*, pp. 212–213). Nevertheless, whether one accepts the High or Low Chronology, either way monumental architecture in these cities is not paired with a growth in residential areas.

³⁸ See V. Fritz, *The City in Ancient Israel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), pp. 117–118; though Fritz also accepts the Low Chronology at Megiddo, and therefore does not assign this Stratum to Solomon, the observation regarding city planning stands (cf. *ibid.*, pp. 87–96).

³⁹ Halpern, “The Construction of the Davidic State,” p. 73; following A. Alt, “Israel’s Gaue unter Salomo,” in *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel* (München: C. H. Beck, 1964), vol. 2, pp. 76–89.

⁴⁰ Halpern, “The Construction of the Davidic State,” pp. 73–74.

empire was small, nor because he did not have an empire at all; it may well be that it was small because its purpose from the beginning was to serve as an administrative stronghold.

3. *The Size of David's and Solomon's Kingdom*

The core home territories of the Israelite tribes stretched from "Dan to Beer-sheba" (2 Sam 24:2, 15; 1 Kgs 5:5b [ET, 4:25b]), with the inclusion of some territories in the Transjordan (e.g., Judg 11:1–12:7; 1 Samuel 11; 31:11–13; cf. also Num 21:21–35). The core of Solomon's empire is simply a standardization of the administration of this Israelite homeland, through the appointment of governors (1 Kgs 4:7–19). The minimalists insist that even this claim that David and Solomon ruled over northern Israel is nonhistorical, reflecting the ideology of later Judean kings rather than the actual situation in the tenth century.⁴¹ But the list of Solomon's governors in 1 Kings 4:7–19 does not have the character of an ideological assertion, but instead seems to reflect an original archival source, as most biblical scholars have recognized.⁴² It is a dry list of names and locations, without theological content or any obvious connection with the traditional tribal divisions, so it is unlikely to have been invented by a later author simply to demonstrate that Solomon's kingdom united all Israel. Nor is there any basis for the claim that this list originally referred to some other king, such as Omri, and was only secondarily linked to Solomon.⁴³

⁴¹ See for instance, Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, pp. 142–143.

⁴² For example, J. Gray, *I & II Kings: A Commentary*, 2nd ed., Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), pp. 24, 134–140; T. N. D. Mettinger, *Solomonic State Officials: A Study of the Civil Government Officials of the Israelite Monarchy* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1971), pp. 111–127; E. Würthwein, *Das Erste Buch der Könige I: Kapitel 1–16 – übersetzt und erklärt*, *Das Alte Testament Deutsch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), pp. 41–46, esp. p. 43; Sarna, "The Biblical Sources for the History of Monarchic Period," 11; S. J. DeVries, *1 Kings*, Word Biblical Commentary 12 (Waco: Word, 1985), pp. 66–68; cf. H. M. Niemann, "The Socio-political Shadow Cast by Biblical Solomon," in L. K. Handy (ed.), *The Age of Solomon: Scholarship at the Turn of the Millennium* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), pp. 252–299, esp. pp. 280–288; Mulder, *1 Kings*, pp. 168–186; Cogan, *1 Kings*, p. 216 (though he thinks the list has developed over time, its core probably goes back to an old administrative text).

⁴³ So N. Na'aman, "Solomon's District System (1 Kgs 4:7–19) and the Assyrian Province System in Palestine," *Ancient Israel's History and Historiography: The First Temple Period, Collected Essays* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), vol. 3, pp. 102–119; Finkelstein, "Stages in the Territorial Expansion of the Northern Kingdom," p. 240; Knauf and Guillaume, *A History of Biblical Israel*, pp. 76, 78. The latter claim to be following Niemann, "The Socio-political Shadow Cast by Biblical Solomon,"

Neither should one dismiss all the rest of the biblical stories in the books of Samuel-Kings that clearly reflect the rule of Saul, David, and Solomon over these northern Israelite tribes. That is, both the narratives and the administrative lists attributed to the United Monarchy in Samuel-Kings consistently reflect dominion over both the northern and southern tribes.

A still larger domain of Solomon is described in 1 Kings 5:1 [ET, 4:21]: “Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt.” Such an extended kingdom presupposes domination not only over Israelites and Judahites, but also over their neighbors. Since no significant wars are attributed to Solomon himself, it can be asked how such a domain could be feasible. However, although Solomon himself is credited with only a single military victory (the siege of Hamath-Zobah in 2 Chr 8:3; an “addition” to 1 Kgs 9:18), in a wide range of diverse texts he is said to have inherited the territories of David, to whom many wars are attributed. Thus, the extended domain of Solomon is based not only on 1 Kings 5:1, but also on a whole range of texts regarding David’s conquests, which correspond to these borders (e.g., 2 Sam 8:1–14). Though at some point in his reign Solomon faced opposition to his rule of those territories (1 Kgs 11:14–28), possibly at the encouragement of Pharaoh Shishak I (931–910 BCE or 945–924 BCE),⁴⁴ these very accounts of opposition already presuppose that the kingdom he inherited extended well beyond Judah and Israel.

A similar claim to that in 1 Kings 5:1 [ET, 4:21] is made with different terms in 1 Kings 5:4 [ET, 4:24]: “For he had dominion over all [the region] *Across-the-River* [עבר הנהר, i.e., the Euphrates], from Tiphshah to Gaza, over all the kings *Across-the-River*; and he had peace on all sides.” Here the phrase “*Across-the-River*” is problematic: this does not fit with the perspective of someone sitting in Jerusalem, but rather someone east of the Euphrates, employing an idiom otherwise first attested in Assyrian records (*ebir-nāri*) from the eighth century BCE.⁴⁵ However, the phrase

pp. 252–299, but while Niemann admits the possibility that 1 Kgs 4:7–19, might have been composed under Omri or later (p. 287–288), the bulk of his discussion of the passage defends the plausibility that this list describes the actual situation under Solomon (pp. 280–288).

⁴⁴ The explicit reference to Shishak’s campaign in 1 Kgs 14:25–28, which is attested by an Egyptian topographic list from his time, implies the use of archival material from the tenth century; cf. Na’aman, “Sources and Composition in the History of David,” pp. 170–171.

⁴⁵ The Akkadian term, *ebir-nāri*, refers to the area west of the Euphrates, and first appears in a letter dating to the time of the Assyrian King, Sargon II (722–705 BCE); see S. Parpola, *The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part 1: Letters from Assyria and the West*, State

"Across-the-River" appears here as a *Wiederaufnahme*: it is repeated on both sides of the words: "[He] had dominion over the region from Tiphseh [on the upper Euphrates] to Gaza [the leading city of the Philistines]." Thus 5:4a, *כי הוא רדה בכל עבר הנהר מתפסח ועד עזה בכל מלכי עבר הנהר*, is altogether an insertion by a late glossator, who either resided east of the Euphrates or was familiar with the Akkadian expression, and used the phrase anachronistically. In fact, the phrase is also an interpretive parallel to the expression "from Tiphseh to Gaza."⁴⁶ In any case, it is not a part of the original description, which includes a list of Solomon's state officials and provincial governors over the Israelite tribes (4:1-19).⁴⁷ Indeed, many scholars consider 5:4, in whole or in part, to be a late gloss on 5:1, which describes similar boundaries for Solomon's kingdom in different terms, and probably derives from an earlier tradition.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, is such an extended empire plausible? Finkelstein and Silberman, like several other revisionists / minimalists, deny that the size and population of Judah and Jerusalem were sufficient to support the extended empire described in the biblical text:

This modest appraisal [of the size of Jerusalem] meshes well with the rather meager settlement pattern of the rest of Judah in the same period, which was composed of only about twenty small villages and a few thousand inhabitants, many of them wandering pastoralists. In fact, it is highly unlikely that this sparsely inhabited region of Judah and the small village of Jerusalem could have become the center of a great empire stretching from the Red Sea in the south to Syria in the north ... There is absolutely no archaeological indication of the wealth, manpower, and level of

Archives of Assyria 1 (Helsinki: University of Helsinki Press, 1987), p. 160, no. 204, line 10. For a detailed discussion and bibliography on this issue, see Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 109-110.

⁴⁶ The words *כי הוא רדה בכל עבר הנהר מתפסח ועד עזה בכל מלכי עבר הנהר* are missing from the Septuagint Vaticanus and Lucian versions, as well as from some Hebrew manuscripts.

⁴⁷ The relatively high number of foreigners in the administrative lists, as well as the frequent and diverse indications of David and Solomon's political alliances with neighboring peoples (such as Tyre and Egypt prior to Shishak I), might also support this picture of an extended political influence, and are unlikely to be an invention of any later Judahite, Israelite, or Jewish writers; see A. Rofé, "The Reliability of the Sources about David's Reign: An Outlook from Political Theory," in E. Blum (ed.), *Mincha: Festgabe für Rolf Rendtorff zum 75. Geburtstag* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2000), pp. 217-227, esp. pp. 222-227. Rofé discusses this issue especially with regard to David, and it is no less true of Solomon.

⁴⁸ See for example, Cogan, *1 Kings*, p. 213: "This verse looks like a gloss on v. 1, defining the territory under Solomon's rule in geographical terms, most of which are anachronistic, late designations." Compare Gray, *I & II Kings*, pp. 140-143, esp. p. 143; Mulder, *1 Kings 1-11*, pp. 188-193, esp. p. 192.

organization that would be required to support large armies – even for brief periods – in the field. Even if the relatively few inhabitants of Judah were able to mount swift attacks on neighboring regions, how would they possibly have been able to administer the vast and even more ambitious empire of David’s son Solomon?⁴⁹

Despite this confident assertion, however, Finkelstein and Silberman do not state from where their estimates of the size and population of Judah derive.⁵⁰

Similar claims have been made by Gunnar Lehmann, who builds on unpublished surveys by Yehudah Dagan and Avi Ofer, to estimate that in the Iron Age IIA there were perhaps only thirty-two inhabited sites in Judah besides Jerusalem.⁵¹ Unlike Ofer’s article cited by Finkelstein and Silberman, however, Lehmann attempts to estimate the population by applying a model developed by Fernand Braudel to the total “built-up area of the Judean mountains.” Lehmann concludes that in Iron Age IIA approximately 2,880–5,760 people lived in Jerusalem and its northern environs, 5,055–10,110 people lived in the Judean highlands south of Jerusalem, and 14,250–28,500 lived in the Shephelah (most of whom were concentrated in the Philistine cites of Gath and Ekron).⁵²

⁴⁹ Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, pp. 133–134, see also 142–143; similar claims are made by Davies, *In Search of “Ancient Israel,”* p. 67; Thompson, *Early History of the Israelite People*, p. 291; idem, *The Mythic Past*, p. 206.

⁵⁰ As throughout *The Bible Unearthed*, Finkelstein and Silberman do not include any notes or explicit reference to their sources regarding the size of Jerusalem (see pp. 132–134, 142–145). As noted earlier, their general chapter bibliography (pp. 362–364) refers to only one source regarding the settlement pattern in Judah, Ofer, “‘All the Hill Country of Judah,’” pp. 92–121, which does not actually include any explicit estimate of the population of Judah; see [Chapter Three](#), §IV, (3), [note 51](#).

⁵¹ Lehmann, “The United Monarchy in the Countryside,” p. 146. More specifically, he states that “sites in Judah (without Jerusalem)” numbered eighteen in Iron I and thirty-two in Iron IIA, while “sites north of Jerusalem (including Jerusalem) were nineteen in Iron I and fifteen in Iron IIA, and “sites in the Shephelah” were six in Iron I and nineteen in Iron IIA (*ibid.*). Lehmann bases these figures on the unpublished dissertations of Dagan and Ofer, supplemented by additional evidence of settlements, where available; for a bibliography, see Lehmann, *ibid.*, pp. 118–119. Ofer’s own estimates are similar: eighteen sites in the Judean hills for Iron I and thirty-four for Iron IIA; Ofer, “‘All the Hill Country of Judah,’” pp. 102–104. However, while Lehmann accepts the Low Chronology, and therefore assumes that the tenth century is represented by the figures of Iron I, Ofer accepts the High Chronology, and therefore assumes that the higher numbers of Iron IIA reflect the tenth century.

⁵² Lehmann, “The United Monarchy in the Countryside,” p. 133. Lehmann, who follows the Low Chronology, dates the United Monarchy to the Iron Age I period, for which he gives even lower estimates: eighteen settlements in Judah outside Jerusalem (*ibid.*, p. 146), with an estimated population of 1,185–2,370 for Jerusalem and the northern highlands,

These figures already leave open the possibility of a considerably higher population than the “few thousand” that Finkelstein and Silberman invoke, and elsewhere Knauf and Guillaume are even more generous, at least when it comes to Saul: They consider his kingdom to be “a country that numbered a total population of 100,000–120,000 by 1,000 BCE,” and add that this “justified putting a crown on his head.”⁵³ But all these figures should be taken with a healthy degree of skepticism, since they are primarily based on survey data. They imply, without arguing, that such surface-level surveys can offer a reliable picture of the total population in the Iron Age; but how can they? How much could have eroded away in the 3,000 years since David and Solomon lived? How many thousands of times has it rained since then? How many people and animals, troops and conquerors have crossed these lands, leaving changes and destruction in their path? How can it be expected that an estimation of what remains on the surface after three millennia could provide any secure basis for dismissing the ancient accounts of the size of the kingdom?

Indeed, even Lehmann admits that the survey data is problematic, open to interpretation, and currently unverifiable, so that any estimates based on it depend on several debatable assumptions: “Certainly, settlement maps drawn with survey data are incomplete. A number of sites have been overlooked, and the estimate of the settlement size is sometimes imprecise . . . Judah and the Shephelah are regions with limited alluvium or Aeolian sediments such as loess, which may cover an ancient site. Here erosion damages the sites and exposes artifacts.”⁵⁴ Surprisingly, however, he concludes from this only that “conditions are good for what has been called ‘site visibility’ . . . Thus, there is a reliable sample of Iron Age sites in the area of investigation.”⁵⁵

Yet if he is correct that the surveys are incomplete and erosion is a significant problem, then it can by no means be expected that all Iron Age sites will have survived and remained recognizable after ca. 3,000 years. In that light, any survey can perhaps provide a *minimum* estimate of the settlement pattern, certainly not a maximum. Thus, Lehmann's conclusion, like those of Finkelstein, Silberman, and other minimalists, is

2,715–5,430 for the southern highlands, and 5,985–11,970 for the Shephelah (*ibid.*, p. 133).

⁵³ Knauf and Guillaume, *A History of Biblical Israel*, p. 67.

⁵⁴ Lehmann, “The United Monarchy in the Countryside,” p. 123.

⁵⁵ Lehmann, “The United Monarchy in the Countryside,” p. 123.

unreasonably confident: “No matter which chronology one follows, the population in the homeland of David and Solomon was very low . . . *It is doubtful* that the three thousand (minimum) or ten thousand (maximum) inhabitants of Judah could have subjugated all of Palestine, not to speak of Syria as well.”⁵⁶ If the survey data on which these estimates are based really is incomplete and very problematic, then the actual population could well have been much higher, though one can hardly presume to know how high.

Further, even if, for sake of argument, one accepts all of Lehmann’s estimates, it cannot be assumed that such a population, united by a charismatic leader such as David, would be incapable of military conquests, particularly if Judah’s military forces were combined with those of the northern Israelite tribes. After all, the biblical texts never claim that David and Solomon ruled the Levant with the men of Judah alone; they affirm that David and Solomon had the allegiance of both the southern and northern tribes under one banner. This certainly did not result from David and the Judahites *conquering* the northern tribes, but instead from the latter peacefully accepting David as a king over them (2 Sam 5:1–3; see also 3:17–27), supporting his rule, and fighting with him. Even the minimalists admit that the northern tribes boasted a significantly higher population than Judah at that time,⁵⁷ so any conclusions regarding the size of David’s empire based on estimates for the population of Judah alone – no matter how low – are irrelevant and misleading. If David and Solomon did win the allegiance of the northern tribes, then not only would they already have controlled much of the southern Levant, but they would also have had the manpower to exert considerable pressure on all the hostile neighboring kingdoms, as the biblical texts describe. Therefore, the key question relevant to the plausibility of David and Solomon’s empire is *not* how many people lived in the southern Judean highlands, but whether the biblical accounts of northern allegiance to David and Solomon are plausible.

⁵⁶ Lehmann, “The United Monarchy in the Countryside,” p. 157, cf. pp. 156–162.

⁵⁷ For instance, Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, p. 143, assert that “of a total of approximately forty-five thousand people living in the hill country, a full 90 percent would have inhabited the villages of the north. That would have left about five thousand people scattered among Jerusalem, Hebron, and about twenty small villages in Judah.” These numbers are also given no explicit justification, but even *if* they are approximately correct, then any king who managed to unite those northern tribes would have had at his disposal a considerably larger army than Judah alone could support.

Moreover, the very selection of Jerusalem as the capital by David (2 Sam 5:4–9), which is historically indisputable, only makes sense under a United Monarchy. As the capital of Judah alone, it was too far north; it only makes sense under a leader who ruled the northern as well as the southern tribes. Certainly no later king of Judah would have founded his capital here, if David and Solomon had not already ruled from Jerusalem, so the incontrovertible fact that Judah's capital was in Jerusalem – and not in Hebron – itself implies that this is the remnant of a once larger United Kingdom.

Support for the existence and military success of the United Monarchy, centered in Jerusalem, may also be found in a range of biblical texts outside those in the early historiography – Samuel-Kings. In particular, J. J. M. Roberts correctly stresses that the Zion traditions reflected in several psalms (e.g., Ps 2; 7; 23; 68; 78; 89; 132), are already appealed to as traditional by Isaiah of Jerusalem in the eighth century, implying that such a tradition predates the period of King Hezekiah of Judah. Roberts argues that the development of such a tradition, which affirms the Lord's enthronement in Zion as ruler of *all* nations, the choice of Jerusalem as his dwelling place, and the exaltation of David and his dynasty in particular, only makes sense in a context of political strength, as numerous ancient Near Eastern parallels attest.⁵⁸ As he notes, “The rise of deities to imperial prominence in the ancient Near East is usually associated with the actual political rise of the deity's city or country . . . Imperial ideologies are easily created in times of political success, and they may be maintained long after those glory days have passed, but one would like some proof that such ideologies were ever created in the ancient Near East in a period of abject weakness.”⁵⁹ If such an imperial theology in Judah does predate the period of Isaiah and Hezekiah – for whom the idea seems already to have been traditional – then the most plausible point at which it could have developed would have been under David or Solomon, with whom it is in any case explicitly linked.⁶⁰

Admittedly, these are poetic texts, not historiographical accounts, but their ideology did not arise in a vacuum; it must be understood against a unique historical background, and the establishment of Davidic

⁵⁸ He points to the examples of Marduk's exaltation by Hammurabi of Babylon, and Inanna's elevation by Sargon of Akkad; see Roberts, “Solomon's Jerusalem and Zion Tradition,” p. 169.

⁵⁹ Roberts, “Solomon's Jerusalem and Zion Tradition,” p. 169.

⁶⁰ See Roberts, “Solomon's Jerusalem and Zion Tradition,” pp. 164–170.

hegemony over Judah's and Israel's neighbors provides a more natural context than during the period of Jerusalem's relative weakness in the period between Solomon and Hezekiah. This tradition implies, therefore, that Jerusalem was at some very early point the capital of a king or kings who succeeded in dominating their neighbors. The only point during the preexilic period that is it possible to conceive of the development of such an ideology is during the reigns of David or Solomon.

Additionally, the broader political situation in the southern Levant of the tenth century would not have presented any insurmountable obstacles to the conquests of a king who had the allegiance of both the southern and northern tribes. As James A. Montgomery and Henry S. Gehman rightly conclude, "Solomon was doubtless the most potent monarch in the area; Damascus under its fresh Aramaean rulers had not in his early years achieved a political importance, although it later gained autonomy" (1 Kgs 11:23–25).⁶¹ Also, Israel's relatively small neighbors – Edom, Moab, and Ammon – could hardly have challenged David's united military forces.

Furthermore, the end of eleventh and the most of the tenth century BCE was a unique geopolitical situation in the ancient Near East more broadly. It was a period of relative weakness among the major peoples of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Anatolia, leaving a rare power vacuum in which no outside empires exerted military control over the southern Levant. It is thus entirely reasonable that this vacuum could have been filled by a united Judahite-Israelite kingdom, as a careful examination of the biblical accounts suggests. This is well encapsulated by Abraham Malamat:

Actually, the unprecedented expansion of the United Monarchy, territorial and economic, was a natural outcome of the geo-political situation prevailing at that time. For centuries, the region of Syria and Palestine had been caught between Egyptian ambitions and those of Mitanni and especially, later, the Hittites . . . The collapse of this constellation led to a political vacuum in the Syro-Palestinian sphere – till the resurgence of Egypt, toward the end of Solomon's reign, and the rise of Assyria, several decades later. This rare moment of calm, free of all "super-power" interference, provided a unique opportunity for the one nation in this region which would most successfully exploit the interlude, and who would thus gain hegemony over what was normally a buffer region. Of all the nations living between the

⁶¹ Montgomery and Gehman, *The Books of Kings*, p. 128.

Nile and the Euphrates and now seeking to assert themselves were, foremost, Tyre on the coast, Aram in the north, and Israel to the south . . . It was David who ultimately fulfilled this destiny.⁶²

4. King Solomon's Harem

A different kind of illustration of the methodology suggested here involves a relatively minor and exotic topic, which appears within a Deuteronomistic passage: When 1 Kings 11:3 attributes to Solomon 700 wives [princesses] and 300 concubines, it is too simplistic merely to dismiss this as a nonhistorical exaggeration; one must attempt to understand the claim. On the one hand, it is true that such extravagant numbers are not only fantastic and typological,⁶³ but also impossible, given the relatively modest size of Jerusalem in the tenth century, which was much too small to support a harem of 1000 women.⁶⁴ On the other hand, one cannot stop there, but must also consider the background, context and purpose of the claim, by comparing it with similar assertions made concerning other kings in the ancient Near East. Despite the exaggerated and symbolic round numbers, large harems were not uncommon in ancient Near Eastern courts (but also commonly exaggerated), with examples attested from well before until long after the time of Solomon.⁶⁵ For instance, a commemorative scarab from the tenth year of Pharaoh Amenhotep III

⁶² A. Malamat, "A Political Look at the Kingdom of David and Solomon and Its Relations with Egypt," *History of Biblical Israel: Major Problems and Minor Issues*, Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 7 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2001), pp. 189–207, esp. p. 192. For an earlier version, see idem, "The Kingdom of David and Solomon and Its Relations with Egypt," *Israel in Biblical Times: Historical Essays* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute and Israel Exploration Society, 1983), pp. 167–194, esp. pp. 172–173. See also Y. Aharoni, *The Land of Israel in Biblical Times: A Historical Geography* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1962), p. 245; idem, *The Archaeology of the Land of Israel*, p. 192; Liver, "On the Chronological Question of Hiram King of Tyre," p. 189; Millard, "The Case for King Solomon," pp. 25–26; Knoppers, "The Vanishing Solomon," p. 25.

⁶³ That is, 7X10X10 plus 3X10X10 equals 1000, or 10X10X10, all numbers that often represented completeness. For example, Job had seven sons and three daughters, 7,000 sheep and 3,000 camels (Job 1:2–3; and cf. 42:12–13, where the animals are doubled). Regarding the number "three," see, e.g., Exod 3:18; 5:3; 15:22; Num 10:33; 33:8; regarding the number "seven," see Gen 2:2–3; Lev 12:2; 25:4, 8; 26:18; Num 23:1; Esth 1:5, 10; 2:9. Note that ten is also a symbolic number, and indeed a derivation of 7+3.

⁶⁴ See §II, 2.

⁶⁵ See A. K. Grayson, "Assyrian Civilization," *The Cambridge Ancient History*, ed. J. Boardman et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 194–228, esp. pp. 197–198 and additional bibliography; R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and*

(fourteenth century BCE) refers to 317 women brought to the Pharaoh with one of his foreign wives.⁶⁶ Further, several wives and concubines are also attributed to each of Solomon's predecessors and successors, though in much more modest numbers. This includes Saul, whose wives and concubines are mentioned in 2 Samuel 3:7, 12:8, and 21:11, and Solomon's father David, who is said already to have married six wives before he moved to Jerusalem (2 Sam 3:2–5), where he also married Bathsheba (2 Sam 11–12), and left ten concubines behind when he fled from Absalom (2 Sam 15:16). Also Solomon's son Rehoboam was said to have had eighteen wives and sixty concubines (2 Chr 11:21), and his grandson Abijah was credited fourteen wives (2 Chr 13:21).⁶⁷ This makes it entirely plausible that Solomon also had a large number of wives and concubines, though the actual numbers were likely closer to those attributed to David and Rehoboam. Thus, the claim that Solomon had a large number of foreign wives and concubines is historically plausible, reflecting a policy of diplomatic marriages from distant, neighboring, and vassal nations, in order to maintain peace and stability in the kingdom (1 Kgs 11:1–2). This is comparable to the diplomatic marriages of other ancient Near Eastern kings, for instance, the royal marriage that took place between Ramesses (Ramses) II of Egypt and the daughter of Hattušili III of Hatti, following the peace treaty between them after the Battle of Kadesh (ca. 1285 BCE).⁶⁸

All of this makes clear that, while the numbers reported in 1 Kings 11:3 certainly cannot be taken literally – and were probably never intended to be – they need not have been pure invention, either. The harem was not necessarily a later projection, because as already noted, the case of

Institutions, trans. J. McHugh (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), pp. 115–117; Montgomery and Gehman, *The Books of Kings*, pp. 234–235, with many additional examples; Würthwein, *Das Erste Buch der Könige I: Kapitel 1–16*, pp. 132–133; Cogan, *1 Kings*, pp. 326–327.

⁶⁶ Cf. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, p. 116; A. Dodson, *Amarna Sunrise: Egypt from Golden Age to Age of Heresy* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2014), pp. 51, and 186, note 91; C. Blankenberg-van Delden, *The Large Commemorative Scarabs of Amenhotep III*, *Documenta et Monumenta Orientis Antiqui* 15 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969), pp. 18 (translation), 129–133 (attested copies).

⁶⁷ See also 2 Sam 5:13; 16:21–22; 20:3; Song 6:8; Esth 2:3, 9, 10, 13; as well as Plutarch, *Lives: Artaxerxes* 27.1–2; Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica* 17.77.5–6.

⁶⁸ See J. A. Wilson, "Egyptian Historical Texts," in J. B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (ANET), 3rd ed. with suppl. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 256b–258a. For an additional example, see also H. G. Güterbock, "The Deeds of Suppiluliuma as Told by his Son, Muršili II," *JCS* 10 (1956), pp. 41–68, 75–98, esp. pp. 94–98. See also [Chapter Three, §II](#).

Amenhotep from the fourteenth century is well before the time of Saul, David, and Solomon.

Nevertheless, the biblical author/editor's purpose in citing these large numbers is not strictly historical, but rather rhetorical, meant either to illustrate the king's greatness and fruitfulness, or his extravagance and profligacy. In the final form of the text, this is part and parcel of a condemnation of Solomon, in exaggerated terms. As such, it must be read in light of the Deuteronomistic law prohibiting kings from taking "many wives" (Deut 17:17). This evaluation of Solomon's marriages reflects the theological intentions of the Deuteronomistic editor and thus the religious and cultural circumstances in which he worked (possibly the seventh century BCE?), but the basic information being reported also reflects some reality of the time that he is describing (the tenth century BCE). Indeed, given how common such a practice was, the Deuteronomistic editor could certainly be drawing upon older sources regarding Solomon and other kings, as part of a historical and theological explanation for the division of the kingdom (1 Kings 11:1–13). Instead of turning to economic, political, or sociological factors that divided the northern and southern tribes, he offers a theological explanation, but the situation he is seeking to explain was not invented by the Deuteronomist, namely that Solomon had a large number of wives and concubines, and that the kingdom was divided after his reign. Both likely derive from his sources or much older traditions; only their association as cause and effect was stylized by the Deuteronomist.

III. CONCLUSION

Currently, there are no direct external sources regarding Solomon and the events of his reign, and the archaeological finds – besides being debatable – have turned up little evidence concerning any political situation in the tenth-century South Levant. Therefore, the biblical texts themselves, as well as the indirect evidence reflected in the Shishak and Tel Dan inscriptions, remain the most important sources we have. This is consistent with the geopolitical situation of the ancient Near Eastern powers at the end of the eleventh to the last quarter of the tenth century BCE. Thus, the reconstructions of King Solomon and his reign, Temple, and royal capital, the size of his kingdom, and the political situation in his time, might be supported by the indirect epigraphical material and archaeological excavations, but at the present time they have to be based primarily on the biblical texts. The usage of the latter depends on one's

evaluations concerning which details of these texts appear reliable or plausible, and to which extent, and how the various parts of the text are literarily and theologically coordinated.

Setting aside their exaggerated numbers and legendary aspects, the biblical texts present a picture of Solomon as one who erected a new Temple – and did not just redecorate or reconstruct an existing one – in his capital, Jerusalem, where he lived with a modest court, but probably a relatively large family and harem. He held the allegiance of both Judah and the northern Israelite tribes, and also ruled in some fashion over several neighboring kingdoms such as Edom, Moab, Ammon, and the Arameans – at least during most of his reign. Towards the end of his life, however, he faced increasing opposition, and upon his death, his son Rehoboam was unable to hold the empire together.

While the evidence presently available cannot definitively confirm this overall picture, it is historically plausible, no ancient source disproves it, and there is a range of circumstantial evidence that can be seen to support various aspects of it. Despite frequent objections of the minimalists / revisionists that the biblical accounts of the United Monarchy are unreliable, their arguments are poorly founded, built on selective and overly skeptical readings of the biblical texts, thereby dismissing the only ancient accounts of this period that have actually survived. Their frequent appeals to the size of Jerusalem and the estimated population of the Highlands of Judah, which are based on incomplete and problematic archaeological data, are insufficient to dismiss the principal biblical testimony on these issues.

Though the biblical texts are neither monolithic nor unquestionable, a careful and critical evaluation of their testimonies – particularly of the early biblical historiography preserved in Samuel-Kings – results in a generally plausible picture of a tenth-century United Kingdom, centered in Jerusalem, that can indeed be reconciled with the geopolitical situation in the ancient Near East and the limited epigraphical and archaeological evidence that we have. That is not to say that every detail of the biblical accounts of Solomon should be accepted without question – on the contrary, every detail should be subjected to meticulous analysis, neither accepted nor dismissed *as a whole*. But there are good grounds for accepting the basic reliability of the text as an attempt to describe the main features and major activities of a real king named Solomon.

The goal of the following chapters is to compare the literary portraits of Solomon found in the Hebrew Bible, particularly in Samuel-Kings and

Chronicles. Nevertheless, it will be seen that the nature of those literary portraits, and their contrasts, cannot be fully understood if it is imagined that they are all purely fictional, invented stories of a world long ago, only written much later in the monarchic era, or in the Persian or Hellenistic periods. Instead, a clear difference will be seen between the Chronicler's method of freely rewriting and harmonizing his sources in the Persian period, and the earlier authors and editors of Samuel-Kings, who display a much greater interest in preserving and coordinating their sources even when the latter contradict one another.

PART II

SOLOMON'S BIRTH, RISE, AND TEMPLE BUILDING

Literary and Historiographical Observations

CHAPTER 5

Solomon's Birth Story and Its Setting in 2 Samuel 10–12

Redaction History versus Compositional Unity

I. INTRODUCTION

The birth of Solomon is reported relatively briefly in 2 Samuel 12:24–25, yet it forms the climax of the comprehensive narrative in 2 Samuel 10–12. The latter weaves together two primary stories – and several minor ones – that might at first seem unrelated: Israel's war with the Ammonites and their allies, and David's affair with Bathsheba and its consequences. These stories are not told in a straightforwardly chronological manner; instead, the narrative jumps back and forth between them, leading many scholars to question whether the text is unified at all. In particular, the condemnation of David's adultery with Bathsheba by the prophet Nathan, and the birth of their two children (roughly 2 Sam 11:27b [ET, 12:1a]; 12:1–25) have often been seen as secondary insertions – in whole or through various stages – leading to a variety of historical reconstructions of Solomon's birth that diverge dramatically from the story told in 2 Samuel 12 itself.

This chapter examines the claim that 2 Samuel 10–12 is the product of more than one editorial hand. In contrast to the so-called redaction history (*Redaktionsgeschichte*) approach, it offers a close reading of the text that uncovers the compositional unity embodied by its literary structures, stylistic techniques, and theological framework. The intention is to demonstrate how the writer combined and unified the various sources that he had in hand (possibly including archival and literary texts), and shaped them into a sophisticated whole. It also explores the historical setting of Solomon's birth story (or report, or announcement) as presented in the biblical text, its unity, and its integration within the surrounding passages.

In order to be clear methodologically, I would like first and foremost to define the terminology that I use in this study:

1. “Comprehensive narrative” refers to 2 Samuel 10–12 (which by itself appears within “David’s Throne Succession Narrative,” usually considered to encompass 2 Sam 9–20 + 1 Kgs 1–2);¹
2. “David-Bathsheba story” refers to 2 Samuel 11:1C–12:25;
3. “Birth story” refers to the literary unit of 2 Samuel 12:24–25;
4. “Episode” refers to any small literary unit within the text.

II. THE HISTORICAL SETTING OF SOLOMON’S BIRTH STORY

As will be seen, the birth story of Solomon (2 Sam 12:24–25) is the climax of the comprehensive narrative (2 Sam 10–12) as well as of the David-Bathsheba story (2 Sam 11:1C–12:25). These two verses recount David’s consolation of Bathsheba, and give Solomon’s two names:

וינחם דוד את בת שבע אשתו ויבא אליה וישכב עמה ותלד בן ויקרא את שמו שלמה ויהוה אהבו.
וישלח ביד נתן הנביא ויקרא את שמו ידידיה בעבור יהוה.

And David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went to her, and lay with her; and she bore a son, and he [*Qerê*: she] called his name שְׁלֹמֹה [Shlomoh / Solomon];² and the Lord loved him, [therefore] He sent word through [literally: by the hand of] Nathan the prophet that for the sake of the Lord [לְשֵׁם יְהוָה] he should be given [called] the name Yedidyah [Jedidiah].

¹ The “comprehensive narrative” is a (semi-)independent narrative unit that has its own opening: ויהי אחרי כן (“and it happened afterward,” 2 Sam 10:1A), as does the story about Amnon, Tamar, and Absalom that follows (13:1A; compare also, for example, 2 Sam 2:1A; 8:1A). On David’s Throne Succession Narrative in detail, see [Chapter Ten](#), §III.

² The personal name “Shlomoh” is not used of any other figure in the Hebrew Bible, but does appear in a document from “City of Judah” (i.e., [New] Jerusalem) in Babylonia, from 561 BCE; see W. Horowitz, Y. Greenberg, and P. Zilberg, *By the Rivers of Babylon: Cuneiform Documents from the Beginning of the Babylonian Diaspora*, [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Bible Lands Museum / Israel Exploration Society, 2015), pp. 38–39. There is also a name with the same consonants but different pointing in Ruth 4:20, שְׁלֹמֶה. Although in the biblical literature the name “Solomon” is unique to David’s son, some men with similar names are mentioned in the Semitic world. For variants of the name, see J. J. Stamm, “Der Name des Königs Salomo,” *TZ* 16 (1960), pp. 285–297, esp. pp. 285–286. For occurrences of names with the root שלם, see M. R. Golub, “The Element שלם in Hebrew Personal Names in the Land of Israel during the Iron Age II Period,” *VT* 65 (2015), pp. 567–587.

³ The term בעבור, which appears forty-nine times in the Hebrew Bible (for example, Gen 8:21; 18:29, 31–32; Exod 9:16; 13:8; 1 Sam 12:22; 2 Sam 5:12; 6:12; 9:1, 7; 12:21; 13:2), means “for the sake of.” Indeed, it so was translated so by Targum Jonathan, too: בדל י, (“for the sake of the Lord”). Some MT and LXX Lucian manuscripts and Old Latin have here: דבר “by the word of.” This reflects either a corrupted Hebrew *Vorlage* or a late correction (or interpretation) of an original Hebrew text (which is the *lectio difficilior*). For this understanding of the phrase as “for the sake of the Lord,” *who loved him*, see the commentary of Rashi and that of Rabbi Isaiah of Trani on 2 Sam 12:25. Nonetheless, it is

These verses are completely enclosed within the comprehensive narrative of King David's military successes and moral failures in 2 Samuel 10–12. Although the main focus of these chapters is David, not Solomon, still the two subjects are closely related.

In the late biblical historiography, the Chronicler notes the birth of Solomon to David and Bathsheba, without providing the historical background of the event (1 Chr 3:5; 14:4 // 2 Sam 5:14).⁴ By contrast, the author of the comprehensive narrative in Samuel provides the brief birth story of Solomon,⁵ the distinctive circumstances that led to it, and their broad historical background. Here the birth story appears as the last link of the David-Bathsheba story (2 Sam 11:1C–12:25), which started with the affair between David and Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:2), and led to their unforeseen matrimony.⁶ David's and Bathsheba's relation, its horrible consequences, and finally their marriage, are

also possible to understand יְהוָה בְּעֶזְרָה as “by the grace/favor of the Lord,” as is in the Phoenician inscription of Azitawadda from Karatepe (ca. 720 BCE; KAI 26:8); see H. Donner and W. Röllig, *Kanaanäische und Aramäische Inschriften* (KAI), Vol. 1: *Texte*, 3rd ed. (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1971), p. 5; Vol. 2: *Kommentar* (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1973), p. 40. Interestingly, neither Koehler and Baumgartner et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, pp. 777–778, nor the last edition of W. Gesenius et al., *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament*, 18th ed. (Berlin and Heidelberg: Springer, 2013), pp. 912–913, offers such a meaning for the phrase.

⁴ See Chapter Seven, §II.

⁵ For the uniqueness of this story in the biblical literature and its ancient Near Eastern context, see Chapter Six.

⁶ 2 Sam 11:2 recounts, “And it came to pass one evening, that David arose from his bed [which was located at the palace, where it usually belongs], and walked on the roof of the king's house; and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself.” This text does not suggest that David purposely walked on the roof to seek a woman in general or Bathsheba in particular, nor that the latter washed herself in order to be seen by the king or anyone else (although the subsequent “relation,” after the king saw her, was not accidental). Thus, it is inaccurate to assert as Steven L. McKenzie does: “There is, first of all, *the fact* that she was bathing where the king could see her. He had *a couch or bed on his roof* and *often* took naps there. Bathsheba knew when and where he slept. The fact that he saw her bathing was no mere coincidence” (*King David: A Biography* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000], p. 182, italics added). It is unclear how McKenzie knows all these “facts.” Which biblical or extrabiblical source indicates that David “had a couch or bed on his roof and often took naps there”? I am unsure of the basis (if any) for McKenzie's argument, and I find the validity of his arguments difficult to evaluate. Similarly speculative is the argument of George G. Nicol that Bathsheba may have sought to seduce the king deliberately, though he at least insists that the text is ambiguous on this point; G. G. Nicol, “Bathsheba, a Clever Woman?” *ExpTim* 99 (1988), pp. 360–363, esp. pp. 360–361; cf. idem, “The Alleged Rape of Bathsheba: Some Observations on Ambiguity in Biblical Narrative,” *JOT* 73 (1997), pp. 43–54.

recounted against the background of and related to the bloody confrontations between Israel and its eastern neighbors, the Ammonites and their allies Aram Beth Rehob, Aram Zobah, the king of Maacah, and the men of Tob (2 Sam 10:1–19 + 11:1⁷ + 12:26–31). In order to emphasize this background (or exposition), the narrator split the story of the confrontations into two portions and placed the David-Bathsheba story – 11:1C–12:25 – in between them.

A brief view of the first portion shows that the *casus belli* for the confrontation is presented in narrative style (2 Sam 10:1–5). However, the factual informative description of the confrontation itself suggests that the narrative is, probably, based on some official reports of the wars preserved in the kingdom's archive.⁸ The confrontation took place in three stages:

1. 2 Samuel 10:6–14 reports the first battle between Israel and the allied Ammonites–Arameans, which most likely took place on the Medeba plain (1 Chr 19:7). Although the allies lost the war, they were not completely defeated.
2. 2 Samuel 10:15–19 describes a second battle at Hēlam, where the Aramean allies were completely defeated and could no longer assist the Ammonites;⁹

⁷ More on the function of 11:1A–b and its relation to 12:26, see §III, 2, B, (c), §III, 2, C.

⁸ This view has been adopted by the vast majority of biblical commentators and historians; see for example, L. Rost, *Die Überlieferung von der Thronnachfolge Davids*, Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament 42 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1926), pp. 74–83, English translation: *The Succession to the Throne of David*, trans. M. D. Rutter and D. M. Gunn, *Historic Texts and Interpreters in Biblical Scholarship* 1 (Sheffield: Almond, 1982); B. Luther, “Die Novelle von Juda und Tamar und andere israelitische Novellen,” in E. Meyer (ed.), *Die Israeliten und ihre Nachbarstämme: Alttestamentliche Untersuchungen* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1906; repr. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967), pp. 175–206, esp. pp. 184–186; P. K. McCarter, Jr., *II Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 9 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1984), pp. 275–276. Moreover, even Nadav Na’aman, who is skeptical of some details regarding the description of the battle of David against the Arameans as described in 2 Samuel 10, acknowledges that “the name of David’s major enemy, his kingdom, the names of his general (Shobach) and his allies, the location of the battlefields, and the ultimate Israelite success in battle, may date back to the time of David”; see Na’aman, “Sources and Composition in the History of David,” p. 175.

⁹ For a historical survey of these events, see for instance, A. Malamat, “Aspects of the Foreign Policies of David and Solomon,” *History of Biblical Israel: Major Problems and Minor Issues*, pp. 208–233, esp. pp. 208–215 (Hebrew version: *Israel in Biblical Times: Historical Essays*, pp. 195–222, esp. pp. 195–203).

3. 2 Samuel 11:1a–b and 12:26–31 recount the siege and capture of Rabbah, the capital of the Ammonites, “in the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle” (וַיְהִי לְתַשׁוּבַת הַשָּׁנָה לַעַת צֵאת הַמְּלָאכִים; 2 Sam 11:1a; cf. 1 Kgs 20:26a; 2 Chr 36:10). This military operation culminates in David’s decisive final victory over the Ammonites.

Only after the complete defeat of the Arameans at Ḥelam, when their dangerous threat had been dismantled and they neutralized, were Israelite forces able to turn to the Ammonites and besiege Rabbah and capture it: “When all the kings who were servants [i.e., vassals] of Hadadezer saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they made peace with Israel, and became subject to them. So the Arameans were afraid to help the Ammonites any more” (2 Sam 10:19). Note that 2 Samuel 10:15–19 is not another phase of the same battle that is described in 10:6–14,¹⁰ but rather the story of the second battle between Israel and the Transjordan kingdoms’ coalition at Ḥelam. Thus, it is unclear what supports John Van Seters’s assertion that that 2 Samuel 10:15–19 is a Deuteronomistic text, but 2 Samuel 10:6–14 is from the “late Persian period,”¹¹ nor why

¹⁰ So, for instance, A. A. Fischer, *Von Hebron nach Jerusalem: Eine Redaktionsgeschichtliche Studie zur Erzählung von König David in II Sam 1–5*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 335 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2004), p. 301.

¹¹ Van Seters justifies his assertion by saying: the Ammonite usage of mercenaries “is typical of warfare in the Persian period as described by Xenophon in his *Anabasis*”; see J. Van Seters, *The Biblical Saga of King David* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009), p. 228. But this argument is baseless: David himself used Philistine mercenaries, “the Cherethites and the Pelethites,” as recorded in 2 Sam 8:18; 15:18; 20:7, 23; 1 Kgs 1:38, 44. Are all of these sources also from the “late Persian period”? In fact, the employment of mercenaries started long before the Persian period. Thus, “foreign mercenaries also joined on to Mesopotamian militaries, alluded to (albeit disparagingly) as early as the 25th century” BCE; see S. F. C. Richardson, “Mesopotamia and the ‘New’ Military History,” in L. L. Brice and J. T. Roberts (eds.), *Recent Directions in the Military History of the Ancient World*, Publications of the Association of Ancient Historians 10 (Claremont: Regina Books, 2011), pp. 11–51, esp. pp. 25–26; in note 69 Richardson cites a Mesopotamian source referring to “hired mercenaries of foreign lands.” Moreover, an early record of mercenaries serving in the Egyptian army dates back to the thirteenth century BCE: Pharaoh Ramesses II (1279–1213 BCE) used 11,000 Nubian mercenaries at the Battle of Qadesh (1274 BCE). Mercenaries from Sardinia appear in their distinctive horned helmets on wall paintings as bodyguards for the same Pharaoh. Auxiliary warriors recruited from outside Egypt’s borders included Canaanites and Syrian contingents under the New Kingdom. “Nubians, Libyans and the famous Sherden, one contingent of which was employed as an élite guard infantry unit by Ramesses II”; see M. Healy, *New Kingdom Egypt*, Elite Series 40 (London: Osprey, 1992), p. 24; Richardson, *ibid.*, p. 13.

one should consider the former text as an “addition” (*Zusatz*), as Lienhard Delekat suggests.¹²

III. REDACTION HISTORY VERSUS COMPOSITIONAL UNITY

1. *Redaction History*

Since the publication of the short note by Friedrich Schwally in 1892,¹³ several scholars have argued that 2 Samuel 11:27b + 12:1–15a (particularly the rebuke of Nathan) is a late, secondary addition to the earlier story.¹⁴ Their argument is that the irritation of the Lord regarding the birth of the first child of David and Bathsheba as told in 11:27b (ET, 12:1a) precedes the Lord’s strike on him in 12:15b. Smith explained the insertion as follows: “A later writer was not satisfied with this [i.e., the punishment in 12:15b], but felt that there must be a specific rebuke by direct revelation.”¹⁵ Several decades later, Walter Dietrich, as well as Timo Veijola, characterized this passage as “an insertion of Deuteronomic prophetic speech” (“ein Einschub des DtrP” [i.e., *deuteronomistische Prophetenreden*]).¹⁶

¹² See L. Delekat, “Tendenz und Theologie der David-Salomo-Erzählung,” in F. Maass (ed.), *Das ferne und nahe Wort: Festschrift für Leonhard Rost zur Vollendung seines 70. Lebensjahres am 30. November 1966 gewidmet*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 105 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1967), pp. 26–36 esp. p. 28, note 4.

¹³ See F. Schwally, “Zur Quellenkritik der historischen Bücher,” *ZAW* 12 (1892), pp. 153–161, esp. pp. 153–155.

¹⁴ See, for example, H. P. Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Samuel*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1899), pp. 321–322, 325; K. Budde, *Die Bücher Samuel: Erklärt*, Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament 8 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [P. Siebeck], 1902), p. 254; W. Nowack, *Richter, Ruth und Bücher Samuelis*, Handkommentar zum Alten Testament I, 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1902), p. 194; E. P. Dhorme, *Les livres de Samuel*, Études bibliques (Paris: Gabalda, 1910), pp. 360–363.

¹⁵ Smith, *The Books of Samuel*, p. 322.

¹⁶ The citation is from T. Veijola, *Die ewige Dynastie: David und die Entstehung seiner Dynastie nach der deuteronomistischen Darstellung*, *Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae B.193* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedakatemia, 1975), p. 113, note 43; see also his article “Salomo: Der Erstgeborene Bathshebas,” in J. A. Emerton (ed.), *Studies in the Historical Books of the Old Testament*, Supplements to *Vetus Testamentum* 30 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979), pp. 230–250, esp. pp. 237–241 (i.e., idem, *David: Gesammelte Studien zu den Davidüberlieferungen des Alten Testaments*, Schriften der Finnischen Exegetischen Gesellschaft 52 [Helsinki: Finnische Exegetische Gesellschaft / Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990], pp. 84–105, esp. pp. 90–94). See also W. Dietrich, *Prophetie und Geschichte: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum deuteronomistischen*

In 1900, Stanley A. Cook stated that not only 2 Samuel 11:27b (ET, 12:1a) + 12:1–15a is a late insertion, as suggested by Schwally, but “the whole 11:27b–12:24a, 25 has been written to render Solomon’s birth as stainless as possible. The insertion is twofold: (α) 11:27b; 12:15[b]–24a, (β) 12:1–15a, 25,”¹⁷ that is, (β) is a later addition to (α), which itself was added sometime before. According to Cook, originally 11:27a was followed by 12:24b: “And when the mourning was past, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bore him a son, and he called his name Solomon.” In other words, the original text of the David-Bathsheba story was, all in all, 11:2–27a + 12:24b. Consequently, Solomon was the first son of David and Bathsheba, begotten as a result of their adulterous affair when she was still Uriah’s wife. As such, Solomon was an illegitimate son, a bastard.

Subsequently, other scholars have followed Cook’s conclusion, such as Elias Auerbach and Ernst Würthwein.¹⁸ In 1979, Timo Veijola joined them and also concluded that the story regarding the death of the first child and the birth of the second one (12:15b–24a, 25) was a late fictional interpolation. Veijola attempted to justify this as follows:

- (a) The story regarding the birth of the first – illegitimate – child (11:27a) could not end there, but came to a close with the giving of the name that appears in 12:24b.
- (b) The story about the birth of Solomon as the second son falls outside of the chronological framework recounted in 2 Samuel 10–12, because the birth of two children requires at least eighteen

Geschichtswerk, Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments 108 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972), pp. 127–132, esp. p. 132 (“DtrP die gesamt Nathan-David-Szene V. 1–14 eingeschoben hat”; he also concludes that “11:27b aller Wahrscheinlichkeit nach von DtrP verfasst”). Some scholars found even within the complex of 2 Sam 11:27b + 12:1–15a two later layers. Thus, for example, L. Rost (who is followed by W. Hertzberg, and R. Smend) considers 12:7–12, except for the words אָתָּה הָרָשִׁית in verse 7a, as a secondary interpolation in two stages: first verses 11–12, and later verses 7b–10. Dietrich accepts this assumption and attempts to strengthen it (*ibid.*, pp. 127–128, and there – on p. 127, note 74 – references to the aforementioned scholars).

¹⁷ See S. A. Cook, “Notes on the Composition of 2 Samuel,” *AJS* 16 (1900), pp. 145–177, esp. pp. 156–157. According to Cook, these insertions are parts of a larger insertion by a glossator – “11:2–12:25.” For the latter view of Cook, see the critical notes of Budde, *Die Bücher Samuel*, pp. 254–255.

¹⁸ See E. Auerbach, *Wüste und Gelobtes Land*. Vol. I: *Geschichte Israels von den Anfängen bis zum Tode Salomos* (Berlin: Kurt Wolff Verlag, 1932), p. 241, note 1; E. Würthwein, *Die Erzählung von der Thronfolge Davids: Theologische oder politische Geschichtsschreibung?* Theologische Studien 115 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1974), pp. 31–32.

to twenty months, and it is unreasonable that the siege of Rabbah took so long.

This late interpolation in 2 Samuel 12:15b–24a was, according to these scholars, intended to cover up the fact that Solomon was actually the first child of Bathsheba, and a result of her adulterous affair.¹⁹ Veijola concludes that Solomon's position as Bathsheba's firstborn is no longer merely an assumption, but most likely *a historical event*.²⁰

Most recently, Thilo A. Rudnig stated once again that the texts in 2 Samuel 12:1–15a (which he calls the “Nathanperikope”) and in 12:15b–24a (the death of the first child), are both late insertions. Rudnig repeats well-known arguments already expressed in the scholarship to advocate the claim (which according to him has become a “broad consensus”) that with the marriage of David and Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:27a) the story almost came to its end, and that usually after the report of the birth of a child one can expect a naming, which appears in 12:24b. Thus, concludes Rudnig, 12:24bα (“and he called his name Solomon”) is a direct continuation of 11:27a (“she became his wife, and bore him a son”), and the text in between these points (11:27b [ET, 12:1a] + 12:1–24a) is late and secondary.²¹

Note, however, that the name of a child is not always given immediately after his birth, see for instance the case of Moses in Exodus 2:1–10.

¹⁹ See Veijola, “Salomo: Der Erstgeborene Bathsebas,” pp. 230–250, esp. p. 241 (i.e., idem, *David: Gesammelte Studien zu den Davidüberlieferungen des Alten Testaments*, pp. 84–105). Veijola is followed by S. A. Nitsche, *König David: Sein Leben, seine Zeit, seine Welt* (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser / Gütersloher Verlag, 2002), pp. 220–223.

²⁰ “Salomos Stellung als Bathsebas Erstgeborener nicht mehr in den Bereich blosser Vermutungen gehört. Vielmehr scheint sie mir das historisch Wahrscheinliche zu sein” (Veijola, “Salomo: Der Erstgeborene Bathsebas,” p. 248). Some scholars follow this determination as if it were a self-evident historical fact. For instance, Ernst Axel Knauf simply states: “As Solomon was Bathsheba's first born”; see E. A. Knauf, “Le roi est mort, vive le roi! A Biblical Argument for the Historicity of Solomon,” in L. K. Handy (ed.), *The Age of Solomon: Scholarship at the Turn of the Millennium*, Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East 11 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), pp. 81–95, esp. p. 89; Knauf and Guillaume, *A History of Biblical Israel*, p. 77 (emphasis added).

²¹ See T. A. Rudnig, “‘Ausser in der Sache mit Uria, dem Hethiter’ (1 Reg 15,5): Jahwes und Davids Gerechtigkeit in 2 Sam 10–12,” in A. G. Auld and E. Eynikel (eds.), *For and against David: Story and History in the Books of Samuel*, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologiarum Lovaniensium 232 (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), pp. 273–292, esp. pp. 275–283. Rudnig had handled this issue already in his *Davids Thron: Redaktionskritische Studien zur Geschichte von der Thronnachfolge Davids*, pp. 55–60, 351. See also Fischer, *Von Hebron nach Jerusalem*, pp. 199–200, who talks about “the older narrative of David-Bathsheba [2 Sam] 11:2–27 + 12:24bα (Qerê)” (“die ältere David-Batscheba-Erzählung 11,2–27 + 12,24bα [Qerê]”).

In addition, Hugo Großmann had already rejected these sorts of assumptions in 1910 for the following reasons:

- (a) It is impossible to put 11:27a and 12:24b together because the reader needs to first know how the narrator evaluates David's handling the problematic results of his affair: the pregnancy of Bathsheba while Uriah served on the battlefield. Therefore, the continuation of 11:27b–12:14 is absolutely necessary.
- (b) Nathan's episode (12:1–14) is a clear expression of the outcome of what has been told in chapter 11. That is to say, David was not a merciless brutal king, but rather did all he could to avoid killing Uriah.
- (c) The Nathan episode is written in the same novelistic style as is that of David and Bathsheba story in chapter 11.²²

Großmann's objections have been ignored for whatever reasons, but there are in fact further and much better reasons to doubt that 11:27b–12:24a is an addition, namely:

- (1) These scholars did not suggest any positive textual evidence for this conclusion. They did not find any indication elsewhere in the text itself that Solomon was ever considered illegitimate.
- (2) There is no philological basis for such assumptions. The texts that these scholars consider to be secondary, late additions, do not reflect any specifically late linguistic or stylistic features.²³

²² "Das ist aus mancherlei Gründen unmöglich, vor allem aber deshalb, weil man zuvor noch erfahren muss, wie der Erzähler über die Handlungsweise Davids denkt und nach welcher Richtung hin er seine Hörer beeinflussen will ... Darum ist eine *Fortsetzung* unbedingt *notwendig*. Da 12,15b sich scheinbar glatt an 11,27 anfügt sieht ein Anzahl Forscher die Nathan-Episode als nicht ursprünglichen und entfernt sie als einen späten Zusatz. Aber auch das ist schwerlich richtig. Denn gerade in der Nathan-Episode klingt derselbe Gedanke, nur lauter, hindurch, der schon im Vorhergehenden leise angeschlagen ist: David soll nicht als völlig gewissenloser Despot vorgestellt werden! Sonst hätte der Erzähler ihm nicht die Versuche zugeschrieben, sich Urias ohne Mord zu entledigen. Erst als alles Andere vergeblich ist, lässt sich der König zum Äussersten drängen. Überdies eignet der Nathan-Geschichte derselbe novelistische Charakter, der auch der Bathsheba-Episode das Gepräge verleiht," H. Großmann, *Die älteste Geschichtsschreibung und Prophetie Israels*, Die Schriften des Alten Testaments 2/1, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1921), pp. 158–159.

²³ In order to overcome this obstacle, Nitsche provides an additional assumption, that the "late addition(s)" were made in the time of the narrator, by a scribe from the wisdom-school who worked in the palace yard of Solomon ("Der frühen Weisheitsschule am salomonischen Hof ist ein solcherart 'aufgeklärter' Text durchaus zuzutragen"); see Nitsche, *König David*, p. 222. However, there is no solid basis for such an assumption.

- (3) None of these scholars provides evidence that Nathan's parable and rebuke (12:1–10) are "Deuteronomistic." In fact, there is no unique Deuteronomistic phraseology, style, or idea in this passage. The phrase, לעשות הרע בעיני ("to do evil in my sight") in 12:9b is not necessarily Deuteronomistic.²⁴ Hans-Joachim Stoebe correctly stresses that anyone who considers it specifically Deuteronomistic overlooks the range of usage of the phrase also in non-Deuteronomistic texts.²⁵ Furthermore, even if one considers this phrase Deuteronomistic, that still does not automatically make the entire passage 12:1–10 a late Deuteronomistic addition. Indeed, 12:11–12 does include a *post-eventum* assertion, which alludes to Absalom's revolt and abuse of David's concubines, as told in 2 Samuel 16:22.²⁶ However, this requires no knowledge beyond the end of David's reign (it certainly does not require that the editor was writing centuries later), and there are other indications that the Throne Succession Narrative as a whole derives from no earlier than Solomon's period, at which point such a *post-eventum* allusion to Absalom could certainly have been included.²⁷ Thus, there is no necessity to conclude, as Moshe Weinfeld does, that while "the prophecy may derive from pre-deuteronomic tradition, it was incorporated into the text and apparently redacted by the Deuteronomist."²⁸ Similarly, there is no reason to consider 2 Samuel 12:13–14 also to be a "later added Deuteronomistic

²⁴ Contra Dietrich, *Prophetie und Geschichte*, p. 131. The context of 12:9 is a literary form of "general" (expression) followed by a "particular" (expression): In the phrases וְאֵלֶּיךָ הִכִּיתִּי בַחֲרֵב בְּנֵי עַמּוּן (verse 9d) and אֶת אוֹרֵייהָ הִחֲתִי הִכִּיתִי בַחֲרֵב (verse 9b), one part of each details what has been said in "general" by the other, that is: וְאֵלֶּיךָ הִכִּיתִּי בַחֲרֵב > אֶת אוֹרֵייהָ הִחֲתִי; and הִכִּיתִי בַחֲרֵב > וְאֵלֶּיךָ הִכִּיתִּי בַחֲרֵב. This feature is common in various strata of biblical literature; see in detail Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 369–380. See also §III, 2, C, note 67.

²⁵ "[D]er Verweist auf überwiegend deuteronomistisch belegte Vorkommen der Formal יהוה עשה הרע בעיני übersieht den Verwendungsumfang des Begriffs," H.-J. Stoebe, *Das zweite Buch Samuelis*, Kommentar zum Alten Testament 8,2 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlaghaus, 1994), p. 283.

²⁶ Compare J. Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments*, 4th ed. (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1899; repr. 1963), p. 256 (for undisclosed reasons, Wellhausen also considers 12:10 to be a late interpolation); Smith, *The Books of Samuel*, p. 324 (without referring to Wellhausen).

²⁷ See Chapter Ten, §III.

²⁸ M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972; reprinted Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992), p. 130, note 4.

transition,” as does Veijola,²⁹ without providing any explanation of what makes these verses Deuteronomistic.

- (4) The description of the events in 2 Samuel 10–12 is nonchronological from start to finish, even without any late redaction. 2 Samuel 12:26–31 is the continuation of the story recounted in 10:1–19 and 11:1a–b.³⁰ Accordingly,
 - (a) The nonchronological nature of the David-Bathsheba story (11:1c–12:25) does not demonstrate that it is a later insertion by a glossator into “the account of a war against Rabbah-Ammon of which it was originally independent,” as asserted by Cook.³¹ Though it may well be that the original author used an independent account of the wars as the frame for the David-Bathsheba story, there is absolutely no reason to assume that the latter was composed centuries after the former, or that the two were first combined by the Deuteronomist.
 - (b) The chronological calculation made by scholars such as Veijola and others (for instance, Stefan A. Nitsche),³² that there cannot have been two pregnancies because then the siege would have had to last about two years (which is implausible), is based on the sequence of the events as presented in the biblical text in 2 Samuel 10–12; this is unreliable, simply because the biblical description of the events is nonchronological.
- (5) As will be seen, a careful literary analysis of 2 Samuel 10–12 shows that all the texts defined by these scholars as late additions or interpolations are, in fact, part and parcel of the David-Bathsheba story (2 Sam 11:1c–12:25), as well as of the comprehensive narrative (2 Sam 10–12). They stand in harmony with the distinct parts of the comprehensive narrative and are coherent with it, and together build a sophisticated concentric form, which has been overlooked in the scholarship. The presumed “interpolations” are organic to the complex of literary structures and

²⁹ See Veijola, “Salomo: Der Erstgeborene Bathsebas,” p. 234: “später hinzugefügte deuteronomistische Überleitung.”

³⁰ See in detail §III, 2, C.

³¹ See Cook, “Notes on the Composition of 2 Samuel,” p. 156.

³² See Veijola, “Salomo: Der Erstgeborene Bathsebas,” pp. 237–241 (i.e., idem, *David: Gesammelte Studien zu den Davidüberlieferungen des Alten Testaments* pp. 90–94); Nitsche, *König David*, pp. 221–222.

cannot be separated from other texts and considered as “later addition(s).”³³

- (6) The recurring words of Nathan’s parable and rebuke and the birth story of the second child in 12:24 are significantly dependent on and related to the David-Bathsheba story and to the birth of the first child in 11:27, and the former is an outcome of the latter.³⁴
- (7) The narrator does not find it necessary to mention the name of the first child in 2 Samuel 11:27b (ET, 12:1a), because the child died shortly after his birth and has no continuity or impact (12:15b–23; see §III, 2, D).
- (8) The phrases ותלד לו בן . . . ותלד בן (“and she bore him a son . . . and she bore a son”) in 11:27b and 12:24b are not necessarily a frame or *Wiederaufnahme*, as suggested by Veijola.³⁵ These phrases are integral parts of the story, by which the narrator forms a clear contrast between the birth of the first and illegitimate child, and the birth of the second and legitimate one (see §III, 2, D). Furthermore, how could the narrator otherwise inform readers about a similar event – the birth of another child by the same mother (12:24b) – without using the frozen (or even fossilized) phrase ותלד בן? In fact, this very phrase appears in almost every other birth report in biblical literature.
- (9) Even if one considers 2 Samuel 12:15b to be a continuation of 11:27b, this does not necessarily mean that all the verses in between these points must be viewed as a late addition.³⁶ Given the way the narrator presents the issues in 11:27 and 12:1–15, he probably wished to state that the sickness and death of the first child were a divine punishment of David and Bathsheba, while relating these issues directly to Nathan’s rebuke and prophecy (12:1–15a). Thus, although David’s deeds were bad in the Lord’s sight (וירע הדבר אשר עשה דוד בעיני יהוה) (11:27b), the Lord forgave him because of the David’s repentance

³³ See §III, 2, B, (a)–(b).

³⁴ See §III, 2, B, (b). Although according to 2 Sam 19:6–7 Joab rebuked David for his reaction to the death of Absalom, the very existence of the affair story of David and Bathsheba and the sharp rebuke of the king by Nathan, who straightforwardly points out: “You are the man!” (12:7), is remarkable in the entire ancient Near Eastern literature.

³⁵ Veijola, “Salomo: Der Erstgeborene Bathsebas,” p. 233; see also Rudnig, “Ausser in der Sache mit Uria, dem Hethiter,” p. 276.

³⁶ See Stoebe, *Das zweite Buch Samuelis*, p. 301.

(וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד אֶל נָתָן הַטָּאֲתִי לַיהוָה) 12:13),³⁷ and because of God's essential love for him, and determined that he would not die (גַּם יִהְיֶה הָעֶבֶר הַטָּאֲתִי לֹא תָמוּת) 12:13b); but the child would be sick and die for David's deeds (גַּם הַבֶּן הַיְלֹוֹד לֶךְ מוֹת יָמוּת) 12:14b). The punishment for David's sins, therefore, was not completely removed, but merely redirected to his little child.³⁸ From a theological perspective, the death of the child for David's deeds stands in contrast to the principle of retribution affirmed in the Deuteronomistic as well as the prophetic literature.³⁹ This undermines Veijola's claim that 12:13–14 is "a later added Deuteronomistic transition."⁴⁰ Nevertheless, although the punishment of David is – theologically speaking – problematic, it shows that at least some sort of justice has been done: His crimes did not pass without any punishment.

- (10) Without the story about the birth and death of the first child (2 Sam 11:27; 12:15b–23), the phrase "then David *comforted* Bathsheba" (12:24a) makes no sense. Why should David comfort his wife if not for the death of her/their child? It is very difficult to assume that this act of David was for the death of Bathsheba's earlier husband, Uriah, whom David himself had ordered killed (11:14–25), particularly if the crime was already known (12:1–10). Thus these scholars insist that 12:24a is also a late addition, but as we will see, it serves as a framing device with 2 Samuel 10:2, tying together the whole comprehensive narrative (see §III, 2, B, c).
- (11) In the absence of the story regarding the birth and death of the first child, the words "and the Lord loved him, [therefore] He sent word through Nathan the prophet that for the sake of the Lord he should be given the name Yedidyah" (12:24d–25) have no suitable context

³⁷ David takes responsibility for his sins not only in this case, but also for his ill deed of taking a census; see 2 Sam 24:10, 17, וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה אֲנִי חַטָּאֲתִי וְאֲנִי הָעֵרִיתִי. וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד אֶל יְהוָה הָטָאֲתִי מְאֹד אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי. . . וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד אֶל יְהוָה, 'I have sinned greatly in what I have done'. . . he said to the Lord, 'I alone have sinned, and I alone have done wickedly. . .'. In contrast, Saul attempted to put the blame for his mistake on his people in 1 Sam 15:15, וַיֹּאמֶר שָׁאוּל מֵעַמְלֵקִי הֵבִיאוּם אֲשֶׁר חָמַל הָעָם עַל מִיטֵב הַצֹּאן וְהַבָּקָר. . . ("Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and the cattle. . .").

³⁸ Cf. Isa 53:4–11.

³⁹ See Deut 24:16; 2 Kgs 14:6; Jer 31:28–29; Ezek 18:2, 20; 2 Chr 25:4. See also Chapter Two, §III, 1, note 46.

⁴⁰ See Veijola, "Salomo – der Erstgeborene Bathsebas," p. 234, cited previously, in note 29.

or explanation: If Solomon was actually the firstborn, why did the Lord love the child who was an outcome of an adulterous affair that actually brought about the death of an innocent person (Uriah)? However, 12:24b, וַיְהוָה אֹהֵב, (“the Lord loved him”) makes sense as a contrast to 11:27b (ET, 12:1a), בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה (דוֹד אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה דָוִד) (“[but the thing that David had done] displeased the Lord”; see §III, 2, D).

- (12) The narrator in Samuel does not explain the meaning of the name שלמה when he mentions it for the first time (2 Sam 12:24). Later, the name’s meaning is indirectly suggested by the word-play (pun/paronomasia) שלמה – שלום (Shlomoh – shalom i.e., “peace”) in 1 Kings 5:4–5 (ET: 4:24–25).⁴¹ Nonetheless, the name שלמה is usually thought to be derived from the root שלם (shillem i.e., “to recompense, replace”), and explained as “his replacement.” That is to say, the second newborn son is the replacement of the first one who died.⁴² The latter explanation seems much more reasonable than the former provided by the author of 1 Kings 5:4–5. David/Bathsheba gave a name to the child that reflects their current reality rather than a name that will reflect the possible unpredictable future lifetime of the child. Furthermore, the scholarly explanation perfectly fits the context of 2 Samuel 12:24, which expresses that David’s intention was to comfort Bathsheba for the death of her first child and to replace him with a new one (see §III, 2, B, d). Indeed, in a similar situation, another biblical narrator clearly states that Eve called her third son’s name Seth, “For God, said she, has appointed me *another seed instead of Abel*, whom Cain slew” (Gen 4:25). Thus, David/Bathsheba named his/her second child “Shlomoh,” that is, the name derived from *shillem*, “to compensate for” or “replace” the lost brother. In other words, this name was given to the second child in reference to the death of the first one. Thus, as was the case regarding the statement

⁴¹ See in detail Chapter Seven, §IV, 1, and the discussion there of the explanations of the name in the Chronistic history.

⁴² See Stamm, “Der Name des Königs Salomo,” pp. 285–297. From among the commentators on Samuel, see, for instance, F. Stolz, *Das erste und zweite Buch Samuel*, Zürcher Bibelkommentare: Altes Testament 9 (Zürich, Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1981), p. 242. For the various possible meanings of the root שלם, see Stamm, *ibid.*; G. Gerleman, “Die Wurzel *šlm*,” ZAW 85 (1973), pp. 1–14. Generally speaking, the biblical name “Shlomoh” parallels the Assyrian name “Sennacherib” (Sin-aḫḫē-erība i.e., “the god Sin has replaced my [dead] brothers”).

- that “David comforted Bathsheba” (as mentioned earlier, cf. (10)), the story about the birth and death of the first child (2 Sam 11:27b [ET, 12:1a]; 12:15b–23) is also necessary to understand the name.
- (13) The suggestion of some scholars, such as Veijola, that by calling her second child “his replacement” Bathsheba was referring to Uriah,⁴³ is most unlikely. It is not clear from the biblical text who, in fact, gave the name Shlomoh to the child: David or Bathsheba (see §V). Yet, on the one hand, if the name-giver was Bathsheba, as the wife of King David, she could not have referred to her ex-husband whom David had murdered,⁴⁴ while clearly knowing that the child is not from Uriah but from David (2 Sam 11:5). On the other hand, if the name-giver was David himself, he surely would not act in such an unreasonable way as to call his own son a “replacement” of the one whom he had ordered killed. In contrast to Steven L. McKenzie (who basically follows Veijola), this is not even a plausible reading of the biblical text: “It [i.e., the name “Solomon”] could be taken as ‘Uriah’s replacement’ in a continuation of the attempt to cover up the sin. Then of course, it could also be ‘David’s replacement’.”⁴⁵

A slightly different approach is taken by Baruch Halpern.⁴⁶ According to him,

The death [of the first son] was not reported to protect Solomon from the allegation that he was the product of an adulterous relationship. Instead, the son’s death proves beyond a doubt that Solomon was really David’s, not Uriah’s child. But the very fact that the narrative takes the trouble to combat the allegation is a reason to ask whether Solomon *was* really David’s son.⁴⁷

Halpern concludes that Solomon was actually Bathsheba’s first son after Uriah’s death, but not David’s son, for the following reasons: (a) “the name Solomon [“his replacement”] ties him to the dead hero Uriah.”⁴⁸ (b) Solomon was excluded from Adonijah’s banquet (however, Halpern stresses that “A foreign ancestry, say from a Hittite, would also explain why Solomon was

⁴³ See Veijola, “Salomo: Der Erstgeborene Bathseba,” pp. 234–236, 248.

⁴⁴ Cf. McCarter, *II Samuel*, p. 303. ⁴⁵ See McKenzie, *King David: A Biography*, p. 182.

⁴⁶ See B. Halpern, *David’s Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2001), pp. 401–404; idem, “‘Path of Glory,’ Shame and Guilt: The Uriah Story as the Hinge of Fate,” in Ch. Schäfer-Lichtenberger (ed.), *Die Samuelbücher und die Deuteronomisten*, Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament 188 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2010), pp. 76–91, esp. p. 84.

⁴⁷ Halpern, *David’s Secret Demons*, p. 401.

⁴⁸ Halpern, *David’s Secret Demons*, p. 402.

not invited”).⁴⁹ (c) “The third indication that Solomon was not David’s son is the activity of Ahitophel, Solomon’s great-grandfather . . . In either case, the name Solomon, ‘his replacement,’ would then refer to *the dead Absalom*, and the actual birth would be narrated out of sequence.”⁵⁰ Finally, Halpern concludes, “more likely . . . is *simply* that Solomon was Uriah’s son . . . Solomon, then, was named for Uriah.”⁵¹

Nevertheless, in addition to the arguments against Veijola (and others) stated earlier, the series of speculative assumptions that Halpern builds upon his suggestion make his approach extremely hypothetical and therefore also unacceptable. Moreover, a close reading of the biblical text in Samuel shows the implausibility of Halpern’s assumption: When David met Bathsheba, she was purifying herself; that is she had just finished her period and was purifying herself from this, which means she could not be pregnant. Further, afterwards, Uriah did not sleep with his wife, as affirmed in 2 Samuel 11:8–13, which recounts Uriah’s refusal to go to his house to be with his wife. So how is it possible that Uriah could be the father of Bathsheba’s son? Halpern implies that all of this is just part of the cover-up, but the *text* is not trying to cover David’s sins; it is revealing the fact that David himself tried to cover up his sin. How are we to imagine that the same narrator who has no problem describing David’s adultery and murder, and even sending Nathan to *expose* David’s cover-up by declaring, “you are the man,” could himself be trying to cover up the “fact” (which is really just an unverifiable assumption) that Solomon was not really David’s son?

The biblical text is the only decisive source that we have to handle these issues. We have no independent source for these events, according to which we can decide which parts to dismiss as fiction or a cover-up and which to accept. David’s attempt to send Uriah home was indeed an attempt to cover up his sin, but that Bathsheba was purifying herself when David saw her is not part of that cover-up. Nor is the narrator party to that cover-up; on the contrary, he explicitly exposes it. Therefore, if we reject the text’s claims – whether regarding Bathsheba purifying herself, the death of the first child, or the affair as a whole – we must have good grounds for doing so, which no one has yet provided.

⁴⁹ Halpern, *David’s Secret Demons*, p. 402.

⁵⁰ Halpern, *David’s Secret Demons*, p. 402.

⁵¹ Halpern, *David’s Secret Demons*, p. 403, italics mine.

2. *The Unity of the Composition and Its Literary and Theological Structures*

A. *The Composition*

Veijola suggests that the whole story of David and Bathsheba's adulterous affair might be "*only* a popularly created, historically worthless anecdote." But this suggestion is unprovable, as he himself admits.⁵² Moreover, who would create such a scandalous story of adultery and murder, which severely stains the moral and religious image and royal leadership of King David? Why should any biblical narrator accept such a serious, accusatory "anecdote" into his writings, and trash the reputation of one of the most admirable Israelite kings (who became the core founder of the Davidic dynasty)?

However, if the story of David's adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah were already publicly known,⁵³ then the function of composing 2 Samuel 11:1C–12:25 is clear: It seeks to demonstrate that – despite David and Bathsheba's infidelity – Solomon was certainly David's legitimate son, and was even beloved by God from the very beginning. As we will see in the [next chapter](#), the account of Solomon's birth and naming is best understood as a royal apology, for which we have many parallels from across the ancient Near East.⁵⁴ Royal apologies are not created from nothing; they respond to specific doubts concerning the legitimacy of a king's succession.⁵⁵ That being the case, 2 Samuel 11:1C–12:25 may imply that there were doubts concerning Solomon's parentage, which the narrative seeks to combat. This is easier to explain if the text was composed relatively soon after the events it describes (at which point rumors about Solomon's legitimacy may still have been current), rather than centuries later.

⁵² "dass die Geschichte von Davids Ehebruch eine *nur* im Volksmund entstandene, historisch wertlose Anekdote sei ... Diese Möglichkeit ist nicht ganz von der Hand zu weisen, aber ebensowenig auch zu beweisen"; Veijola, "Salomo: Der Erstgeborene Bathsebas," p. 248 (italics mine).

⁵³ See Ishida, *History and Historical Writing in Ancient Israel*, pp. 156–157. As he puts it: "Evidently, no attempt was intentionally made to conceal the Bathsheba affair. Perhaps, the scandal was too-known to be omitted" (*ibid.*, p. 156).

⁵⁴ See [Chapter Six](#).

⁵⁵ See Knapp, *Royal Apologetic in the Ancient Near East*, pp. 25–26: "Apologetic is rhetorical; one composes an apology for the purpose of persuasion (as opposed to, for example, purposes such as entertainment or administration). Rhetorical composition does not arise in a vacuum but requires a relational context in order to have meaning ... For apologetic, the specific situation (or exigence) involves accusations that demand a rebuttal" (*ibid.*, p. 25; Knapp does not discuss the David-Bathsheba story).

B. *Literary Structures*

(a) From External (Periphery) to Internal (Center)

A close reading of the comprehensive narrative (2 Sam 10–12) reveals that it is structured in such a way that events move from the *external* issues at the **periphery** of the Israelite kingdom to the *internal* and intimate ones in the **center** of the kingdom.⁵⁶ It opens with a report on the political and military activities of David *outside his kingdom* (that is, the delegation to Ḥanun, king of the Ammonites, and the wars with the Ammonites and Arameans in the East Transjordan Land). Then it moves to describe the acts that took place *within the kingdom*, in its capital, Jerusalem (that is, recounting David and Bathsheba's adulterous affair and its murderous consequences). In Jerusalem, it turns to the *king's palace* (that is, Bathsheba in David's house, Nathan's rebuke, and the birth and death of the first child). Finally, it ends with the king's rehabilitated intimate relationship with Bathsheba – now his wife – which culminates in the birth of their second child, Solomon (12:24–25).⁵⁷ The short story of Solomon's birth is, therefore, the *final part* of the David-Bathsheba story (2 Sam 11:1C–12:25), which is located within a comprehensive narrative (2 Sam 10–12) that includes the wars between Israel and the Transjordanian kingdoms.

(b) Concentric Circled Stories

The comprehensive narrative is also shaped in five concentrically circled stories, beginning at the periphery of David's realm and moving in toward its center. Each leads to – or is a result of – the other. The outermost circle (1) recounts David's diplomatic delegation *to console/comfort* Ḥanun, the new king of the Ammonites (וישלח דוד לחננו; 10:1–5).⁵⁸ The humiliation of the delegation by Ḥanun (for whatever reason) leads to the second circle (2) – the wars between Israel and the Ammonite-Aramean coalition and the siege and conquest of Rabbah (10:6–19; [11:1]; 12:26–31).⁵⁹ These wars are the historical background/exposition to the third circle (3), which recounts the adulterous affair between David and Uriah's wife,

⁵⁶ Though it jumps back to the periphery at the end, in 2 Sam 12:26–31, as will be seen.

⁵⁷ For a different view of 2 Samuel 10–12, one that is in my opinion much less convincing, see McCarter, *II Samuel*, pp. 307–308.

⁵⁸ Similarly, after the death of David, Hiram king of Tyre sent a diplomatic delegation to Jerusalem to his successor, Solomon, to renew the friendly relationship between the two kingdoms (1 Kgs 5:15 [ET, 5:1]). For examples of this custom in the ancient Near East, see W. L. Moran, "The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy," *CBQ* 25 (1963), pp. 77–87, esp. pp. 80–81.

⁵⁹ On the literary function of 2 Sam 11:1, see §III, 2, C.

Bathsheba, the murder of Uriah, the birth of Bathsheba's first child, and the prophet's rebuke (11:1C–12:15a), events that resulted in circle (4), the sickness of Bathsheba's first child, David's mourning, and the death of the child (12:15b–23). These circumstances lead to the final circle, (5), where David *comforts* his anguished wife: He sleeps with her and brings about the birth of their second child, who was named Solomon (וינחם דוד את בת-שבע אשתו ויבא אליה וישכב עמה ותלד בן ויקרא את שמו שלמה; 12:24–25). Thus, the birth story of Solomon is located in the *heart* of the comprehensive narrative (2 Sam 10–12). It is the climax of the comprehensive narrative, as well as of the David-Bathsheba story (2 Sam 11:1C–12:25). Structurally, 12:24–25 is a circle in its own right and at the same time it is also used as an end bracket (or closure) to 2 Samuel 10–12. This structure and the unique position of 12:24–25 highlight the significance of Solomon's birth from David's now legitimate wife. Notice that here the narrator mentions, for the first time, the wife's/mother's personal name "Bathsheba," whereas previously he had referred to her as אשה (ה) ("[the] woman," 2 Sam 11:2, 5) or אשת אוריה (החתי) ("the wife of Uriah [the Hittite]," 11:26; 12:10, 15). To be sure, 2 Samuel 11:3 presents her as: הלא זאת בת שבע בת אליעם אשת אוריה החתי ("This is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite"). But these words are attributed to the messengers who introduce her to David; that is, they are not a reference from the narrator himself.

(c) *Inclusio*

There are two types of *inclusio* that frame the comprehensive narrative. The first is a general one, which opens and closes with wars between Israel and the Ammonites: It begins with a report of the two battles of David against the Ammonites and their coalition (2 Sam 10:1–11:1a–b), and ends with the siege and conquest of Rabbah, the capital of Ammon (12:26–31). In between these two parts of the struggle with Transjordanian enemies (which are linked by *Wiederaufnahme* in 2 Sam 11:1a–b and 12:26; see §III, 2, C), the author/editor recounts the *complete* David-Bathsheba story and *all its consequences* (that is, the birth and death of the first child, the rebuke of Nathan the prophet, and the birth of the second child – Solomon). The author/editor thus organized his material in this way despite the fact that the birth of these two children probably took place after, rather than during, the siege and conquest of Rabbah.

The second *inclusio* is in 2 Samuel 10:2 and 12:24. Here the comprehensive narrative opens with the comfort of the foreign king in his palace: "And David sent [his officials] to *comfort* him [i.e., Hānun]" (וישלח דוד לנחמו),

10:2) for the death of his father, Naḥash. A comparable act of comfort also opens the short story of the second birth (which itself is a closing part of the David-Bathsheba story), but this time it is directed towards his wife in his own palace: “then David *comforted* Bathsheba” (וַיִּנְחֵם דָּוִד אֶת בַּת-שֶׁבַע (12:24), for the death of her/their child. Both episodes use the verb נָחַם (“to comfort”).⁶⁰ In both episodes the verb is used after the death of a kin (Ḥanun’s father and Bathsheba’s child) and expresses condolence.⁶¹ Thus the author/editor of the comprehensive narrative connects these episodes by framing them within the literary form of an *inclusio*, which opens and ends with similar words.

(d) Contrasting David’s Actions

After the death of his first son from Bathsheba, David did not wish to follow him to Sheol, as Jacob wished after the presumed death of his son Joseph (Gen 37:31–35), but rather he went and sleep with Bathsheba: “Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and he went in to her, and he lay with her” (12:24). Because the idiom וַיִּשְׁכַּב עִמָּה (“and lay with her”) has an identical meaning as וַיֵּבֶא אֵלֶיהָ (“and he went in to her,” for sexual intimacy), the phrase וַיֵּבֶא אֵלֶיהָ וַיִּשְׁכַּב עִמָּה is a tautology. Apparently, the narrator strove to contrast this action by David with his earlier one that was reported in 11:4, וַתָּבוֹא אֵלָיו וַיִּשְׁכַּב עִמָּה (“and she came to him, and he lay with her”).⁶² The earlier act (11:4) was *for him* – David – and his uncontrolled sexual desires, while she, Uriah’s wife, was expected to obey the king and commit adultery with him. But the latter act (12:24) was *for her* – Bathsheba – since David wanted

⁶⁰ David’s comforting of Ḥanun at his father’s death is, obviously, of a different kind and quality than his comforting of Bathsheba at the death of their first son. Nonetheless, the narrator uses the same word in both cases, implicitly linking them. For the verb, see H. Simian-Yofre, “נָחַם, *nḥm*,” in G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, and H.-J. Fabry (eds.), *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1986), vol. 5, pp. 366–384.

⁶¹ Cf. Gen 38:12, וַיִּנְחֵם יְהוּדָה (‘‘then Judah was comforted’’) after the death of his wife, the daughter of Shua. In that case, as in 2 Sam 12:24, a man comforts himself or someone else by sleeping with a woman: Judah with Tamar and David with Bathsheba. Carol Newsom notes that having sex is the most consistent mark of the end of mourning in the biblical accounts, occurring also regarding Isaac (Gen 24:67); Ephraim (1 Chr 7:22–23), and, implicitly, Job (Job 42:11–13), as well as elsewhere in the ancient Near East; see C. A. Newsom, ‘‘The Consolations of God’: Assessing Job’s Friends across a Cultural Abyss,’’ in C. Exum and H. G. M. Williamson (eds.), *Reading from Right to Left: Essays on the Hebrew Bible in Honour of David J. A. Clines*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 373 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2003), pp. 347–358, esp. pp. 349–350, note 3.

⁶² Despite the similar wording, the meaning of the phrase וַיֵּבֶא אֵלֶיהָ (‘‘and he went in to her,’’ sexually) is not identical with וַתָּבוֹא אֵלָיו (‘‘and she came to him,’’ physically). However, perhaps in both cases the phrase is used as a double entendre.

to comfort his legitimate wife for the death of her/their son. Thus, the phrase *וַיִּשְׁכַּב עִמָּהּ* in 12:24 is an integral part of the original text, rather than a late gloss as Arnold B. Ehrlich assumed.⁶³ Indeed, it is difficult to see why the addition of such a gloss would have been deemed necessary by a later glossator/editor, if it had not been there originally. Nonetheless, the latter meeting between David and Bathsheba ended the cycle of tragic events and led to the birth of another child, this time a legitimate one, namely Solomon, who replaced the earlier, illegitimate child who died. Accordingly, Solomon's birth story in 2 Samuel 12:24–25 is not a “postscript,” and does not stand “as an appendix to the larger story that precedes it” (i.e., 11:2–12:23), nor has it “been added as a matter of obligation by the author of 11:2–12:23, to which it seems to have had no special thematic significance,” as P. Kyle McCarter, Jr. asserts.⁶⁴ Rather, it is a natural outcome – or, if you wish, the “happy ending” – of the David-Bathsheba story, and as such is an integral part of it.

C. Further Literary Methods

The description of the events in 2 Samuel 10–12 is not in chronological order. The account of the capture of Rabbah in 2 Samuel 12:26–31 is an unambiguous continuation of the story told in 10:1–19 and 11:1a–b, as clearly attested from the substance of the texts in 11:1b (“David sent Joab and his armed forces with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah”) and in 12:26 (“And Joab fought against Rabbah of the Ammonites, and took the royal city”). This repetition can be seen as an example of the well-known literary technique of *Wiederaufnahme* (“resumptive repetition,” though it does not match the classical form, since 2 Sam 12:26 does not repeat all the words of 2 Sam 11:1b).⁶⁵

Because the text constituting the interval between the two halves of a *Wiederaufnahme* is often an insertion, this might be understood to imply that 2 Samuel 11:1c–12:25 constitutes a late addition to an earlier account of the war. However, a *Wiederaufnahme* does not

⁶³ See A. B. Ehrlich, *Mikrâ ki-Pheschutô, II. Divrei Soferim* [in Hebrew] (Berlin: M. Poppelauer's Buchhandlung, 1900; repr., Library of Biblical Studies, New York: Ktav, 1969), p. 216.

⁶⁴ See McCarter, *II Samuel*, pp. 307, 308.

⁶⁵ For a detailed discussion of this literary device, including examples from early and late biblical literature, see Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 275–294, and the additional references there to the secondary literature.

always mark a late addition; it can also reflect the combination of disparate sources by a single author. That is to say, sometimes the text constituting the interval is not later than the surrounding text, but simply derives from elsewhere (whether from the author/editor himself, or some other source available to him), and the author/editor uses this literary device to weave the material together into a consistent whole. In the case in 2 Samuel 10–12, the David-Bathsheba story is one integrated unit, which could theoretically have derived from a different source than the war report that currently frames it, and was secondarily linked to the rest of the comprehensive narrative – regarding the Ammonite wars – through this *Wiederaufnahme*. If so, then the non-chronological nature of the account would simply reflect the combination of distinct sources.

Nevertheless, it is not necessary to conclude that this repetition results from distinct layers or sources. In this case, the material inside the repetition reflects similar themes, language, and style as that which stands outside it, and the two are correlated by more than just these framing verses, as the war is also referred to throughout chapter 11 as a whole. Therefore, the *Wiederaufnahme* in 2 Samuel 11:1b and 12:26a should be understood as a literary technique marking a return to the previous topic rather than as a redactional seam.

In fact, 11:1a–b relates to both 10:1–19 and 12:26–31. Verse 11:1c passes the reader from the descriptions of the struggles with the Transjordanians outside the kingdom to the activities of David inside, in Jerusalem. It indicates that David stayed in Jerusalem and conducted an affair with the wife of Uriah, while the latter fought for him to besiege Rabbah. This implies that the siege and conquest of Rabbah (11:1a–b; 17) occurred *before* the birth of both the first, unnamed child, as well as that of the second child, Solomon (respectively, 12:13–23 and 12:24–25). In other words, both children were born *after* the siege and conquest of Rabbah – which could have taken some months to complete, but surely not two years – but the narrator chose to follow the story of David and Bathsheba to its conclusion first, before returning to the (chronologically earlier) account of the war. Correspondingly, he marked this nonchronological, thematic transition by using the literary device of a *Wiederaufnahme*, tying the two accounts together but also signaling to the reader that he is now returning to finish the earlier story of the war with the Ammonites. The following points support this conclusion:

- (a) This narrator refers to the Ammonite wars in the David-Bathsheba story explicitly in 2 Samuel 11:7, 11, 15–18, 20–21, 23–24; 12:9. This means that when he narrated 2 Samuel 11:10–12:25, the war against the Ammonites and the siege of Rabbah served for him as the historical background, explaining when and how the David-Bathsheba affair happened. The story of David and Bathsheba could not exist independently of its present context, but was instead composed *as part* of the comprehensive narrative. One cannot understand the story of David and Bathsheba without this historical background, which reports that David stayed in Jerusalem while Uriah did not, making it possible for David to sleep with Bathsheba, explaining why Uriah refused to go home to his wife when David called him, and how Uriah was killed in the siege of the Ammonite city. In all of these cases, the narrator explicitly ties the characters' actions to their context during the siege of Rabbah.
- (b) There are several reiterated words and phrases in the David-Bathsheba story, which bind the various parts of the literary complex with one another and with the larger comprehensive narrative. In addition to the references to the war with the Ammonites, which appear both inside and outside the David-Bathsheba story, the following examples should be noted:
1. The phrase *וַיִּנָּחֵם דָּוִד אֶת בֶּת-שֶׁבַע* in 2 Samuel 12:24 is related to the one in 10:2, *וַיִּשְׁלַח דָּוִד לִנְחָמוֹ*, as previously discussed (§III, 2, B, c).
 2. The phrase *וַיָּבֹא אֵלֶיהָ וַיִּשְׁכַּב עִמָּה* in 12:24 stands in contrast to the similar action accounted in 11:4, *וַתָּבוֹא אֵלָיו וַיִּשְׁכַּב עִמָּה* (see §III, 2, B, d).
 3. The phrase in 2 Samuel 12:1, *וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוָה אֶת נָתָן אֵלָיו* (“*And the Lord sent Nathan to David, and he came to him*”), is related to 11:4, *וַיִּשְׁלַח דָּוִד מַלְאָכִים וַיִּקְחָהּ וַתָּבוֹא אֵלָיו* (“*And David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him*”). In addition, this expression in 2 Samuel 12:1 recalls and is related to 11:6, *וַיִּשְׁלַח דָּוִד אֶל יוֹאָב שֹׁלֵחַ אֵלַי אֶת אוּרִיָּה הַחִתִּי וַיִּשְׁלַח יוֹאָב אֶת אוּרִיָּה אֶל דָּוִד* (“*So David sent [word] to Joab, ‘Send me Uriah the Hittite.’ And Joab sent Uriah to David*”).
 4. The phrase in 12:3, *מִפְתּוֹ תֹאכַל וּמִכֶּסֶּךְ תִּשְׁתֶּה וּבִחְיקוֹ תִּשְׁכַּב* (“*he used to eat of his bread, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom*”) is related to Uriah's words in 11:11, *לֹאכַל וּלְשִׁתּוֹת וּלְשֹׁכַב עִם אִשְׁתִּי* (“*to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife*”).

5. The phrase in 2 Sam 12:9b, ⁶⁶לעשות הרע בעיני יהוה, refers to וירע הדבר ... בעיני יהוה in 11:27b (ET, 12:1a; and as we saw earlier, in §III, 1, no. 3, it is not necessarily a Deuteronomistic phrase).
6. The phrase in 2 Samuel 12:10b, ותקח את אשת אוריה החתי להיות לך לאשה, (“and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite *to be your wife*,” cf. 12:9),⁶⁷ refers to 11:27a, וישלח דוד ויאספה אל ביתו ותהי לו לאשה, (“David sent and fetched her to his house, and *she became his wife*”).
7. The idiom מקים עליך (“I will raise upon you”) in 12:11 recalls דוד ויקם (“and David rose”) in 11:2 (although, one must admit that קום is a relatively common verb).
8. The birth of the second child ends with the words: ותלד בן ... ויהוה אהבו (12:24b), which stands in contrast to the description of the birth of the first one that ends: בעיני יהוה ... וירע הדבר (“and she bore him a son, and it displeased ... the Lord,” 11:27b, ET, 12:1a).

Theoretically, the reiteration of language can also be an editorial technique employed in order to impose an impression of unity upon a disparate whole. Nevertheless, the recurring words and phrases discussed here, particularly their accumulative quantity, literary quality, their similar *style* (which is unique to each writer), and the fact that at least some of the recurring phrases are quite unique (such as the expressions 4 and 8), supports the compositional unity of the David-Bathsheba story (2 Sam 11:1c–12:25), as part of the comprehensive narrative (2 Sam 10–12), by a sophisticated author/editor.

D. Rhetorical Contrast: The Unnamed First Child – The Double-Named Second One

August Klostermann’s speculation that “Yedidyah” was the name of the first child,⁶⁸ is unfounded. The narrator in Samuel neither reveals whether the first child was given a name at all, nor mentions any name for him.

⁶⁶ The form בעיני is *Qerê*, the *Ketib* is בעינו. Targum Jonathan and Vulgate reflect יהוה בעיני.

⁶⁷ Verse 12:10b, ותקח את אשת אוריה החתי להיות לך לאשה, is a “particular” expression of the “general” assertion in 12:9, ואת אשתי לקחת לך לאשה, rather than “disruptive duplication” as it was described by Dietrich, *Prophetie und Geschichte*, pp. 127–128.

⁶⁸ See A. Klostermann, *Die Bücher Samuelis und der Könige*, in H. Strack und O. Zöckler (eds.), *Kurzgefasster Kommentar zu den heiligen Schriften Alten und Neuen Testaments* 3 (Nördlingen: C. H. Beck, 1887), p. 182.

He refers to that child either as הילד (“the child,” 2 Sam 12:15, 18, 19, 21–22), as הבן (“the son,” 12:14) or as הנער (“the boy,” 12:16). This phenomenon of referring to the newborn child by the terms הילד or הנער, as well as the interchange of these terms, is not unusual in the Hebrew Bible. Compare, for example, Genesis 21:12, 17, 18, 19, 20 (הנער) with Genesis 21:14, 15, 16 (הילד); also, Exodus 2:3, 6a, 7, 9, 10 (הילד) with Exodus 2:6b (הנער). The same exchange of the terms appears also in the story regarding the son of the Shunammite in 2 Kings 4:17–18, 32–36. However, unlike the cases in Genesis and Exodus, where later the author (s) mention(s) the names of “the child” / “the boy” (Ishmael and Moses), the narrator in Samuel keeps the child anonymous. Likewise, the children of the two harlots (1 Kgs 3:16–27), the son of the mistress of the house where Elijah lived (17:17–24), and the son of the Shunammite woman all remain anonymous.

Thus, it could be that the first child of David and Bathsheba received a name following his birth, similar to the other biblical cases such as in Genesis 4:1–2, 17, 22, 25–26, but there is no credible reason to think that the name was Yedidyah. It is much more likely that the narrator in Samuel simply does not mention the name of the first child because it was not necessary to the continuity of the story. After all, this child died, after only seven days (regardless of whether this is a typological or an exact number; 2 Sam 12:18).⁶⁹ He has neither durability nor any significant impact on what follows. In contrast, when the second child is presented as one who received two names, Shlomoh (by one of his parents) and Yedidyah (by Nathan; 12:24d–25),⁷⁰ the future importance and impact of the second child on the Davidic House is made obvious from the very beginning. Most likely, the stories regarding the first child (11:27a + 12:15b–23) and the second child (2 Sam 12:24–25) were composed in light of one another in order to create a deliberate contrast between them. In other words, these stories are related – by the same author – and each of them has been told and highlighted in opposition to the setting of the other.

⁶⁹ The cause of death is not stated, but this is not unusual. Historically speaking, until the development of modern medicine infant mortality was very high; see for example, 1 Kgs 3:19; 14:17.

⁷⁰ For the two names of the second child, the ones who gave him those names, the purpose of the name “Yedidyah,” and for discussion of the biblical and ancient Near Eastern conventions concerning throne-names, see §V, and the next chapter.

E. The Theological Structure

From a theological viewpoint, the David-Bathsheba story (2 Sam 11:1C–12:25) is a single uniform literary unit, which is constructed as follows:

1. David's *transgressions* (adultery and murder; 11:2–27a)
2. Nathan's prophetic *rebuke* (11:27b–12:10)
3. Divine *punishment* (12:11–12, 14–15)
4. David's reaction, in three steps:
 - (a) Immediate confession: חטאתי ליהוה ("I have sinned against the Lord," 12:13);
 - (b) An attempt to cancel the instantaneous punishment, that is, the child's illness (12:16–17, 20–23);
 - (c) The death of the child (12:18–19), and his successful restart with Bathsheba (12:24–25).

This structure is coherent: Each point is presented as a logical outcome of or reaction to the previous one, and the structure ends with the birth of a new child – Solomon – which extends hope and aspiration.

Interestingly, this structure of the narrative of David's transgression with Bathsheba is also visible in another case in the book of Samuel, namely in the story of Saul's transgression in handling the booty of the Amalekites, whom he had defeated (1 Sam 15):

1. Saul's *transgression* (violation of God's order; 15:8–9)
2. Samuel's prophetic *rebuke* (15:16–19, 22–23a)
3. Divine *punishment* (15:23b, 26–29)
4. Saul's reaction, in three steps:
 - (a) Attempt to cover-up his sin (15:13–15, 20–21);
 - (b) Confession: חטאתי כי־עברתי את־פִּי־יהוה ואת־דבר־ךְ ("I have sinned, for I have transgressed the command of the Lord and your words;" 15:24, cf. 25, 30a);
 - (c) Saul's attempt to launch a new start (15:30b–33), which fails (15:34–35).

In addition, both stories – the story of Saul and the Amalekites as well as that of David and Bathsheba – start with a historical exposition (1 Sam 15:1–3; 2 Sam 10:1–19; 11:1; 12:26–31). Both stories recount that the Israelite kings defeated their enemies and took booty from them: Saul from the Amalekites (which he should not have done; 1 Sam 15:3, 9, 19, 21), David from the Ammonites (2 Sam 12:30). Furthermore, there are stylistic similarities between the two cases. For example, compare Samuel's word to

Saul: אתי שלח יהוה למשחך למלך על עמו על ישראל . . . וימשחך יהוה למלך על ישראל ("The Lord sent me to anoint you to be king over his people, over Israel . . . the Lord anointed you king over Israel"; 1 Sam 15:1a, 17b), with Nathan's prophetic rebuke: כה אמר יהוה אלהי ישראל אנכי משחתיך למלך על ישראל ("Thus said the Lord God of Israel, I anointed you king over Israel"; 2 Sam 12:7); and Saul's confession, חטאתי כי עברתי את פי יהוה ("I have sinned; for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord"; 1 Sam 15:24), with David's confession, חטאתי ליהוה ("I have sinned against the Lord"; 2 Sam 12:13).⁷¹

The theological and stylistic similarities between 1 Samuel 15 and 2 Samuel 11–12 demonstrate the sophisticated structure of these texts by a single author/editor, rather than the work of numerous redactors over the span of centuries.

Overall, the various literary structures and methods (including the recurring words and phrases) as well as the fixed theological framework, attest to the coherent and sophisticated compositional unity of the David-Bathsheba story within the comprehensive narrative as a whole. Again, that is not to say that the author/editor had no written or oral sources (particularly regarding the war against the Ammonites and their allies, it seems likely that sources from a royal archive were available to him). Instead, the point is that a single author/editor, whatever sources he may have used, composed a unified composition more or less as we have it; it is not the result of centuries of small or large additions to a text that was originally substantially different from what we have in the current biblical text.

IV. CONCLUSION

Solomon's birth serves as the climax of the biblical account in 2 Samuel 10–12, yet too often this has been obscured by scholarly attempts to divide the story into disconnected fragments or layers. This chapter challenges the redaction-critical reconstructions of 2 Samuel 10–12 (the "comprehensive narrative"), while demonstrating their many weak points and unreasonable arguments. Instead, it argues that the comprehensive narrative and the David-Bathsheba story (2 Sam 11:1c–12:25) in these

⁷¹ For additional verbal and thematic links between 2 Sam 12 and 1 Sam 15, see McCarter, *II Samuel*, p. 300, though he overlooks the structural parallels.

chapters form a unified composition – in fact, a literary masterpiece. It demonstrates the integrity of this unit, based on literary structural, stylistic, and theological features that span the whole. It argues for a complex concentric structure that demonstrates authorial intent, and points to words, phrases, and styles that recur in various sections of the whole and provide thematic unity. In addition, the study makes many fresh observations on the literary shape of 2 Samuel 10–12 as a whole and includes some specific issues.

In some detail: The narrator of this text in Samuel furnishes the reader with the distinctive circumstances that led up to the birth of Solomon. He narrates the latter as the last link in the David-Bathsheba story (2 Sam 11:1c–12:25), which took place during the bloody struggles between Israel and its eastern neighbors, the Ammonites and Arameans, and ties them to it. The comprehensive narrative (2 Sam 10–12) is structured in a manner that moves from the external matters at the periphery of the kingdom to the internal and intimate matters at the center of it. The narrator emphasizes the significance of the birth of Solomon by placing it in the center and at the climax of the David-Bathsheba story, which itself is located within the comprehensive narrative. The latter is bounded by multiple *inclusios*, and structured around five concentric circled stories, each of which leads to, or is the result of, the other. It opens with David sending a delegation to console H̄anun (10:2), and closes with David's consoling of Bathsheba (12:24). This latter consolation concludes with the birth of Solomon as the legitimate child of a married couple, who replaces the illegitimate one who passed away. Solomon's birth story is a natural outcome of the David-Bathsheba story and an integral part of it. The latter can be understood only within the context of the comprehensive narrative, regarding the war with the Ammonites. Solomon's birth is the climax to the entire theological trajectory of the account, which implicitly contrasts David's sin and rehabilitation, in 2 Samuel 11–12, with Saul's sin and rejection, in 1 Samuel 15. Both texts present the king's transgression, followed by a prophet's rebuke and then a divine punishment, and end with the king's reaction and its consequences. But whereas Saul first attempts to cover up his mistake and is ultimately rejected, David confesses first and is ultimately restored. Therefore, 2 Samuel 11:27b–12:25a is an essential part of the original ancient David-Bathsheba story (11:1c–12:25) rather than a secondary addition from centuries later.

V. EXCURSUS: WHO GAVE THE NAME “SHLOMOH”
TO THE SECOND-BORN CHILD?

According to the *Ketib* in 2 Samuel 12:24, the name Shlomoh (שלמה; LXX: Σαλωμών i.e., Salomon i.e., Solomon)⁷² was given to the newborn child by David, at birth: “Then David comforted Bathsheba his wife . . . and she bore a son, and *he called* [וִיקְרָא] his name Shlomoh.” Indeed, David is the central figure in the entire David-Bathsheba story, including the birth story, so there is no wonder that he would also give the name to the child. The phenomenon of a father giving a name to his son is not unusual in biblical literature: Among others, Abraham named his sons, Ishmael and Isaac, who were born to him by Hagar and Sarah (Gen 16:15; 17:19 and 21:3). Exodus 2:22 says regarding Moses’ son: “And she bore him a son, and *he* [i.e., Moses] called his name Gershom; for *he* said, I have been a stranger in a strange land.”⁷³ However, the *Qerê* in 2 Samuel 12:24, as well as some Masoretic manuscripts, Targum Jonathan, and the Peshittab read here: “and *she* [i.e., Bathsheba] called [וִתְקַרָא].” Indeed, usually the mother (or, occasionally, a close female member of the family) named the newborn child, as reflected in many places in the Hebrew Bible.⁷⁴

A similar case appears in the naming of Seth (although in an opposite direction): According to Genesis 4:25, Eve begot a son “and *she called* [וִתְקַרָא] his name Seth.” However, the Samaritan Torah reads here, “and *he* [i.e., Adam] called [וִיקְרָא] his name Seth.” Moreover, Genesis 5:3 recounts that Adam fathered a son, “and *he* called his name Seth.”⁷⁵ In this case it is possible that the Samaritan Torah harmonizes between Genesis 4:25 and 5:3. But regarding the case of Solomon, it is difficult to say whether the scribe of the *Qerê* and the Aramaic translators “corrected” the text of 2 Samuel 12:24 according to the usual custom in the Bible that the mother gives a name to her child, or whether they reflect an original variant of the Hebrew text. Nonetheless, the version of the *Qerê*

⁷² Josephus Flavius (*Jewish Antiquities* 7.158) has the form Σολομων i.e., Solomon, which is synonymous with the one used in English translations.

⁷³ See also Gen 4:26; 5:28–29; 35:18; 41:51–52; Judg 8:31; Isa 8:3; Hos 1:4, 6, 9; Job 42:14; 1 Chr 7:22–23; and in the New Testament sources: Matt 1:21 and 25; Luke 2:21.

⁷⁴ See, for example, Gen 4:1; 29:32–35; 30:6, 8, 11–13, 18–20, 24; 35:18; Exod 2:10; 1 Sam 1:20; 4:21.

⁷⁵ Compare also Gen 38:3: “And she [i.e., Judah’s wife] conceived, and bore a son; and *he* [i.e., Judah] called his name Er,” with the following verses (38:4–5): “And she conceived again, and bore a son; and *she* [i.e., Judah’s wife] called his name Onan. And *she* yet again conceived, and bore a son; and *she* named him Shelah.”

and the Aramaic translators is not “*without a doubt* the older text form,” as Veijola states,⁷⁶ nor is it certain that “*she* called his name Solomon,” as some other scholars assert.⁷⁷

Meanwhile, though the name Solomon was given to the child by one of his parents, either David or Bathsheba, the name Yedidyah was given to him by a divine messenger – Nathan the prophet – by the Lord’s command. In the [next chapter](#) I discuss the name Yedidyah, and its significance and aim.⁷⁸ Here it is worth remarking briefly that 2 Samuel 12:24–25 sets up the legal and divinely authorized status of the future king who will succeed to David’s throne, rather than his elder half-brother, Adonijah.

⁷⁶ Veijola, “Salomo: Der Erstgeborene Bathsebas,” p. 234: “*ohne Zweifel* die ältere Textform”; italics mine.

⁷⁷ See, for example, W. Caspari, *Die Samuelbücher mit Sacherklärungen versehen*, Kommentar zum Alten Testament 7 (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1926), p. 545; R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, trans. J. McHugh (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), p. 108: “The child of David and Bathsheba *received the name of Solomon from his mother*”; McCarter, *II Samuel*, pp. 293, 303: “*she* called him”; the *New English Bible*: “and *she* gave birth to a son and *called him* Solomon”; and more recently, Knauf, “Le Roi est Mort, Vive le Roi!,” p. 89: “Solomon’s name was given *by the mother*”; Halpern, “‘Path of Glory,’ Shame and Guilt,” p. 84: “*She named* her second son” (see also idem, *David’s Secret Demons*, p. 401). All italics are mine.

⁷⁸ See in detail [Chapter Six](#), esp. §II-III.

CHAPTER 6

Solomon as the Lord's Beloved King in Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Contexts

I. INTRODUCTION

Solomon's brief birth story (or report, or announcement), as recounted in 2 Samuel 12:24–25, is unique in the entire historiography of the ancient Israelite kingdoms. Though there are birth stories regarding judges or rulers, such as Samson (Judg 13) and Samuel (1 Sam 1), there is no story regarding the birth of any other king, unless one accepts the suggestion made by several scholars that either the birth story in 1 Samuel 1 was originally not about the Prophet Samuel but about King Saul,¹ or that Samuel's birth story was composed from materials

¹ The root שאל appears in 1 Sam 1:17, 20, 27, and particularly 28 (including as an etymology for Samuel's name; see also 2:20). Though all three characters of שאל appear in Samuel's name (שמואל), Saul's name (שאול) offers a closer parallel. See J. Dus, "Die Geburtslegende Samuels, I. Sam. 1: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu I. Sam. 1–3," *RSO* 43 (1968), pp. 163–194; M. M. Buber, "Samuel and the Sequence of the Israelite Authorities," *Way of the Bible* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1978), pp. 238–269, esp. pp. 246–247, and there, references to earlier bibliography, in notes 19–20; Stolz, *Das erste und zweite Buch Samuel*, p. 25 ("Ursprünglich handelte diese Erzählung von Saul, nicht von Samuel"); M. [Z.] Brettler, "The composition of 1 Samuel 1–2," *JBL* 116 (1997), pp. 601–612, esp. p. 602; M. White, "'The History of Saul's Rise': Saulide State Propaganda in 1 Samuel 1–14," in S. M. Olyan and R. C. Culley (eds.), "A Wise and Discerning Mind": *Essays in Honor of Burke O. Long*, *Brown Judaic Studies* 325 (Providence: Brown University Press, 2000), pp. 271–292, esp. pp. 287–288; W. Dietrich, *1 Samuel 1–12*, *Biblische Kommentar Altes Testament* 7/1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2010), p. 29; R. Gilmour, *Representing the Past: A Literary Analysis of Narrative Historiography in the Book of Samuel*, *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum* 143 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2011), pp. 47–49. Note that the motif of the Nazirite appears in 1 Sam 1:11 and in the birth story of Samson (Judg 13:5, 7, 14); see also Num 6:1–21; Amos 2:12.

regarding Saul's birth and Nazirite dedication.² There is no story at all regarding the birth of David, or that of any later king of Judah or Israel. Moreover, David had several other sons by his various wives, but none of the circumstances around their births have been recounted. We may wonder, then, whether there was a particular purpose in narrating Solomon's birth from amongst those of all David's sons and all Israelite and Judahite kings.

Chapter Five discussed the name Solomon (שלמה) and the biblical-historical setting of Solomon's birth story as revealed in its literary framework. There I argue that it is integrated into the literary framework of the David-Bathsheba story (2 Sam 11:1C–12:25), and within a still larger comprehensive narrative (2 Sam 10–12). Nonetheless, the comprehensive narrative itself also appears within the so-called Succession Narrative (2 Sam 9–20 + 1 Kgs 1–2), which is driven by questions such as: "Who will succeed to the throne of David?" or, more specifically, "Why should Solomon have risen to his father's throne?"³ As will be seen, these questions are directly related to several others: What is the relationship between the two names⁴ Solomon and Yedidyah (ידידיה; Jedidiah)? What do they mean or represent? Why did the divine messenger, the Prophet Nathan,⁵ give the second name – Yedidyah – to the child, and why was the affirmation "and the Lord loved him" appended?

The intention of this chapter is to discuss these questions, and to correlate the birth story's motifs – particularly the statement of divine

² "But the entire account has been overlaid with the personal details of Samuel's childhood – his father's name, his mother's name, the name of his native village"; see P. K. McCarter, Jr., *I Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 8 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1980), pp. 65–66. Moreover, it seems that the author of 1 Samuel 1 purposely created wordplay between the names *Shemuel* and *Shaul*; see R. Kessler, *Samuel: Priester und Richter, Königsmacher und Prophet*, Biblische Gestalten 18 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2007), pp. 44–46.

³ On "David's Succession Narrative," see Chapter Ten, §III.

⁴ See J. A. Soggin, "King Solomon," in C. Cohen et al. (eds.), *Birkat Shalom: Studies in the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern Literature, and Postbiblical Judaism Presented to Shalom M. Paul on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008), vol. 1, pp. 169–174, esp. p. 169.

⁵ Contra McKenzie who claims: "It is striking that verse 25 reports that *David* called the boy Jedidiah ("beloved of Yahweh")"; see McKenzie, *King David: A Biography*, p. 182 (italics mine). That this name was given to Solomon by the Prophet Nathan is clearly stated by the biblical verse: ויהוה אהבו: וישלח ביד נתן הנביא ויקרא את שמו ידידיה ("And the Lord loved him. And he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he called his name Jedidiah").

predilection and the giving of a second name – within its own historico-political, religious, and literary contexts, and especially in relation to comparable ancient Mesopotamian, Anatolian, Egyptian, and Persian birth stories and royal succession traditions. I will show that Solomon's birth story is not only deeply rooted within 2 Samuel 10–12, as part of David's Throne Succession Narrative (2 Sam 9–20, 1 Kgs 1–2), but should be understood as the birth story of a usurper king (Solomon) when read against the background of 1 Kings 1–2 as well as the surrounding cultural setting of the ancient Near East.⁶

The idea of the divine origin of kingship and the divine election of the kings of Israel and Judah lies at the center of ancient Israelite historiography. Indeed, there are several clear-cut accounts of the divine election of and support for the successions of Saul (1 Sam 10–12; 15:1, 17) and David (1 Sam 16:1–13; 2 Sam 3:9–10; 5:2; 7:8–9; Ps 78:70–72; 89:4–38 [ET, 89:3–37]; see also 2 Sam 22:51 // Ps 18:51 [ET, 18:50]; 2 Sam 23:1–3), as well as the divine rejection of Saul from the kingship (1 Sam 15:10–11, 26–28; 16:1a, 14; 28:15–18). Scholars have discussed this concept in the writings of the great civilizations of the ancient Near East.⁷ Some researchers

⁶ After this chapter was completed, Andrew Knapp's study *Royal Apologetic in the Ancient Near East* was published, which addresses some of the sources discussed here, and others. Nonetheless, the reader can easily recognize that our focuses, evaluations, and interpretations, as well as our conclusions, are significantly different, as explicitly noted throughout the following discussion. Moreover, my major point is the interpretation of 2 Sam 12:24–25, which Knapp barely touches (see *ibid.*, p. 253). Knapp also does not discuss the Sumerian, Old Babylonian, and Neo-Assyrian sources regarding Sargon the Great of Akkad and Sargon II of Assyria. In the Hittite texts regarding Hattušili III, Knapp overlooks the connection between the apology of this king and that in the legend of Sargon the Great. Nor does he discuss the Egyptian writings regarding Hatshepsut and some other Pharaohs, or the case of Xerxes I of Persia.

⁷ See, for example, T. Ishida, *The Royal Dynasties in Ancient Israel*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 142 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1977), pp. 6–25, 55–80; N. Brisch (ed.), *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond*, Oriental Institute Seminars 4 (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2008); Knapp, *Royal Apologetic in the Ancient Near East*. In addition to the examples discussed later, and by Ishida and Knapp, it is worth mentioning King Darius I (“the Great,” 522–486 BCE) of Persia. Darius was neither a direct descendant of Cyrus II nor of his son Cambyses; in fact, he was an illegitimate king. Thus he states in his Behistun Inscription that he ascended the throne by overthrowing the usurper Gaumāta, and “according to the will of Ahuramazdā I became king; Ahuramazdā has given me the kingship”; see R. Schmitt, *Die altpersischen Inschriften der Achaimeniden* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2009), pp. 42–45, esp. p. 45, and compare p. 38 (§5) and p. 40 (§9).

have also addressed the apologetic nature of David's and Solomon's stories.⁸ However, to date, no comprehensive, comparative, and detailed discussion has been devoted to the purpose and meaning of "Yedidyah" and the phrase "and the Lord loved him" within their wider biblical and ancient Near Eastern contexts and parallels. This investigation will demonstrate that 2 Samuel 12:24–25 uniquely combines two motifs found in many ancient Near Eastern royal apologetic texts: divine legitimation and the taking of a new name by usurper kings.

II. "SOLOMON" AND "YEDIDYAH": THE BIBLICAL TEXT AND SCHOLARSHIP

The biblical narrator emphasizes the significance of Solomon and his future impact on the Davidic dynasty and Israelite history from his first appearance. As we have mentioned, Solomon is introduced as the second-born child of David and Bathsheba. But whereas the firstborn child is presented without any name, the second child receives two names – Solomon and Yedidyah.⁹ Moreover, while the name Solomon was given to the newborn by one of his parents, the name Yedidyah was given to him by the Prophet Nathan, by command of the Lord:

And *the Lord loved him*, (therefore) He sent word through [literally: by the hand of] Nathan the prophet that for the sake of the Lord [בעבור יהוה]¹⁰ he should be given [/ called] the name Yedidyah (2 Sam 12:24d–25).

The phrase "and the Lord loved him" (ויהוה אהבו) in 12:24d explains the name and adds sense to it, and, through a chiasmic ordering of the elements, clarifies why the child should have received it: Yedidyah (ידידיה),

⁸ See, for example, P. K. McCarter, Jr., "The Apology of David," *JBL* 99 (1980), pp. 489–504; Ishida, *The Royal Dynasties in Ancient Israel*, pp. 55–80, esp. pp. 70–80; idem, *History and Historical Writing in Ancient Israel*, pp. 107–110, 151–157; Knapp, *Royal Apologetic in the Ancient Near East*, pp. 161–276. Knapp barely discusses 2 Sam 11–12 (see *ibid.*, pp. 198–199, 253–254), but Ishida compares the David-Bathsheba story with Nathan's Prophecy, and artificially concludes that the "David-Bathsheba story is identical with Nathan's Prophecy in the structure" (pp. 152–154, esp. p. 154).

⁹ On this issue see Chapter Five, §III, 2, D.

¹⁰ On the term בעבור, its appearance in the Hebrew Bible, its meaning ("for the sake of"), and its rendering in some MT manuscripts, LXX Lucian, and Old Latin, see Chapter Five, note 3.

"beloved of the Lord."¹¹ The words אהב and ידד in this context appear as synonyms.¹² In fact, the child could have been named אהוביה, or 12:24 could have read ויהיה ידדו, and the effect would have been the same. Nonetheless, the name-giver chose to use ידידיה instead of אהוביה, while the author preferred the more common term אהב to explain it.

Furthermore, the narrator does not specify *when* exactly the name Yedidyah was given to Solomon, although the text gives the general impression that it occurred at some point shortly after the birth of the child.¹³ Nor does the narrator indicate the rationale for such a divine love for this mewling infant who was as yet innocent of any deeds worthy of note. The question naturally arises as to what the purpose was of giving a second name to the child. Biblical scholarship has provided a number of suggestions, for example:

- (1) Moshe Zvi Segal explains the name Yedidyah as an "honorary title" only, similar to the phrase in Deuteronomy 33:12, "to Benjamin he said: beloved of the Lord" (לְבִנְיָמִן אָמַר יְדִיד יְהוָה). Therefore, asserts Segal, this name was not used in the everyday life of the king,¹⁴ and as such it was never used elsewhere in the books of Samuel and Kings. Indeed, it is puzzling that the name Yedidyah was not used explicitly by Solomon himself or anyone else in the entire biblical literature. There is, however, no example of a custom in Israel or any ancient Near Eastern society of the divine or parental imposition of an honorary title upon a newborn.
- (2) Fritz Stolz assumes that the name Solomon means "replacement," that is, he is replacing the first child who died. Nathan disliked this name of the second-born child, because in his view the first child should not be considered as a human being and therefore should

¹¹ Thus, for a better understanding of the text, the last phrase of the previous verse (2 Sam 12:24d), should be read together with verse 12:25, and then there is no need to "correct" the text in 2 Sam 12:25, as suggested by Klostermann, *Die Bücher Samuelis und der Könige*, p. 182.

¹² That ידד means "beloved" and comes together with דוד, so for instance in Isa 5:1, אֲשִׁירָה גַּם לִידִידִי שִׁירַת דָּוִד לְכַרְמִי ("Let me sing for my beloved my love-song concerning his vineyard"). On this verse in Isaiah, see the discussion by N. Wyatt, "'Jedidiah' and Cognate Forms as a Title of Royal Legitimation," *Biblica* 66 (1985), pp. 112–125, esp. pp. 115–116.

¹³ See Ishida, *History and Historical Writing in Ancient Israel*, p. 156.

¹⁴ See M. Z. Segal, *The Books of Samuel* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1976), p. 308.

not be replaced at all. Accordingly, Nathan gave to Solomon a new name: Yedidyah.¹⁵ But there is no clue in the biblical literature that Nathan considered the first child as nonhuman or that he disliked the second child's name. It is true that the first child was considered a bastard and therefore had a low social status.¹⁶ But it is a leap to assume that the infant was treated as a nonhuman because of his parents' adulterous affair.

- (3) Nicolas Wyatt considers Yedidyah to be a cognomen (i.e., nickname or family name) that is equivalent to "David," in the sense of דָּוִד ("beloved"). According to this scholar, the "divine choice of kings of Judah was indicated by the giving to them of a cognomen, which tended to be the same one."¹⁷ In support of this, he claims that several other occurrences of דָּוִד or דָּוִי in the Hebrew Bible could refer to the Davidic king (e.g., Ps 60:7 [ET, 60:5]; 108:7 [ET, 108:6]; 127:2; Isa 5:1), and that the name or title was used as a means of identifying the legitimate royal successor under the Davidic monarchy.¹⁸ If correct, this would offer a separate means of support for my later argument that Yedidyah is a term of royal legitimation, which the biblical historian has projected back to the time of Solomon's birth. However, Wyatt's argument is philologically dubious and lacks concrete evidence. First of all, it is not clear what he means by "cognomen," nor which precise name he thinks was used in this way: David, Yedidyah, or just any form of דָּוִד or דָּוִי. Second, in contrast to the Romans, there is no indication of the

¹⁵ "Dass Nathan dieser Name missfällt, ist verständlich; das erste Kind ist in seinen Augen ein Un-Mensch, für den es keinen Ersatz geben kann und darf"; see Stolz, *Das erste und zweite Buch Samuel*, p. 242.

¹⁶ On the legal and social status of bastards in ancient Israel, see Deut 23:3 [ET, 23:2]: "A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the Lord"; see also Zech 9:6. Unfortunately, the study of N. Avraham, *Marginal People in Biblical Times: Lawbreakers and Banished Persons, Lepers and Gonorrhea Sufferers, Homosexuals and Transsexuals, Prostitutes and Temple-Prostitutes*, The Biblical Encyclopaedia Library 27 [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2011), does not address the status of bastards.

¹⁷ See Wyatt, "'Jedidiah' and Cognate Forms as a Title of Royal Legitimation," pp. 112, 117.

¹⁸ In another article, Wyatt speculates even further that Uriah and Bathsheba were in fact the king and queen of Jerusalem before David conquered it, and that the latter's marriage to Bathsheba represents his claim to kingship, so that their son Solomon must be the heir, as confirmed by the oracle given to Nathan; see N. Wyatt, "'Araunah the Jebusite' and the Throne of David," *ST* 39 (1985), pp. 39–53. There is no basis whatsoever for this imaginative reconstruction.

custom of the giving or holding of cognomina in ancient Israel or any other Semitic societies. In the latter, a person's name was usually attached either to his or her father's/mother's name and/or to his or her clan/tribe or place name, thus: "X, son/daughter of Y from Z clan/tribe (and/or place)."¹⁹ Third, Wyatt's claim that David was not actually a personal name, but rather a kind of title or throne name – an argument already made by other scholars²⁰ – is especially questionable: It does not actually explain why Solomon is referred to as "Yedidyah" rather than "David," nor is there any other evidence that David was ever used as a cognomen or a throne name. The name David is used throughout the biblical literature as well as in the Tel Dan Stele as a personal name (line 9: *bytdwd* "House of David").²¹ Hence when David introduced himself to Saul: "David said: 'I am the son of . . . Jesse the Beth-lehemite'" (1 Sam 17:58).²² Nor is there any basis for concluding that Yedidyah reflects a cognomen used regularly by the Davidic kings, as the term is never repeated. More interesting, however, is Wyatt's suggestion that Yedidyah parallels both the titles attached to the Canaanite gods Yam and Mot (*mdd il* and *ydd il* respectively), and the legitimization formulae used by Egyptian kings, *Mer-(n)-[divine name]* (that is, "beloved of [divine name]"). The Ugaritic texts offer a close linguistic and conceptual parallel, but do not refer specifically to human kings or usurpers, but Wyatt's discussion of the Egyptian dynastic lists and the case of Ḥaremḥab can be seen to supplement the examples of Hatshepsut and other Pharaohs that are discussed later (§IV, 2, C).

- (4) Robert Alter proposes: "perhaps the second name, indicating special access to divine favor, reflects a political calculation *on the part of Nathan*: he is already aligning himself with Solomon

¹⁹ Thus, for example, (1) a person attached his or her name to his or her father's/mother's name: "Joab the son of Zeruiah . . . Abner the son of Ner . . . Amasa the son of Jether" (1 Kgs 2:5); (2) or to his or her place/land name: "Barzillai the Gileadite" (1 Kgs 2:7), "Ruth the Moabite" (Ruth 2:2); (3) or to his or her father's or clan name, and to his or her tribe and place names: "Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite of Bahurim" (1 Kgs 2:8), "Mordechai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite, who had been exiled from Jerusalem" (Esth 2:5).

²⁰ See (5), and cf. [Chapter Two, §1](#), regarding the Tel Dan inscription.

²¹ See Biran and Naveh, "An Aramaic Stele Fragment from Tel Dan," pp. 81–98; cf. idem, "The Tel Dan Inscription: A New Fragment," pp. 1–18.

²² Note, the Chronicler similarly identifies the new king as "Solomon son of David" (2 Chr 1:1; cf. 1 Chr 29:1; 2 Chr. 13:6; 35:3).

(and Bathsheba), figuring that in the long run it will be best to have a successor to David under some obligation to him” (italics mine).²³ Nevertheless, as stressed previously, the biblical text gives the impression that the second name for the newborn child was given briefly after his birth at the behest of the Lord. It is difficult to attribute to Nathan – or, in fact, to anyone else – such a very long-term personal calculation. Besides, Alter does not explain why Nathan gave to the child this name in particular and not another one, such as ברוך or מבורך (“Baruch” or “Meborach,” both mean “blessed one”), which would also show a positive attitude towards the child.

- (5) Some scholars – such as Alexander M. Honeyman, Roland de Vaux, and P. Kyle McCarter, Jr. – consider the name Yedidiah to be the private (or birth) name, and Solomon the throne (or coronation/regnal) name.²⁴ De Vaux, for instance, compares this case to those of the Judean kings who had two names: “Uzziah – Azariah” and “Jehoahaz – Shallum.”²⁵ However, as de Vaux himself admits, “in every instance, we are still in the realm of hypothesis: the most one can say is that it is probable, though

²³ See R. Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 & 2 Samuel* (New York: Norton, 1999), p. 263. Similarly John Van Seters asserts, without reference to Alter, “It [i.e., 2 Sam 12:24] merely establishes a close link between Solomon and the prophet, who apparently used the name ‘Jedidiah’ as a term of affection for the child, and accounts for the fact that Nathan is a member of the Solomon party in the fight for succession”; see Van Seters, *The Biblical Saga of King David*, pp. 300–301, esp. p. 301.

²⁴ See A. M. Honeyman, “The Evidence of Regnal Names among the Hebrews,” *JBL* 67 (1948), pp. 13–25, esp. pp. 22–23; de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, pp. 107–108, esp. p. 108 (and detailed references there to the biblical sources); McCarter, *II Samuel*, pp. 303, 308.

²⁵ In the cases of “Elyaqim – Jehoiachin” and “Mattaniah – Zedekiah,” the second name had been given to them by the foreign oppressors; see de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, p. 108. On “Uzziah – Azariah,” see also the discussion by Honeyman, “The Evidence of Regnal Names among the Hebrews,” pp. 20–22. On pp. 23–24, Honeyman also discusses: “David (throne name; 1 Sam 16:13) – Elhanan (private name; 2 Sam 21:19b).” On the latter issue see L. M. von Pákozdy, “Elhanan – der frühere Name Davids?” *ZAW* 68 (1956), pp. 257–259. However, David and Elhanan most likely do not represent two names for one person, as some scholars harmonize, but rather two names of two different persons: According to one tradition, which survived in 1 Sam 17, the Philistine hero, Goliath, was struck down by David, while according to another tradition, which is documented in 2 Sam 21:19b, Goliath was defeated by a man named Elhanan. The Chronicler harmonizes these contradictory traditions in Samuel by creating an alternative third version, saying that “Elhanan the son of Jair slew *Lahmi* the brother of Goliath the Gittite,” (1 Chr 20:5b). In other words, David killed *Goliath*, and Elhanan killed *Lahmi*, the brother of Goliath.

not certain, that the kings of Judah took a new name when they succeeded to the throne.”²⁶

III. TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF “SOLOMON” AND “YEDIDYAH” – THE BELOVED OF THE LORD

The reality was precisely the opposite of that suggested by de Vaux and other scholars, since Solomon was a birth name, not a coronation name. The biblical narrator specifically states that this name was given to the child by one of his parents immediately after his birth (2 Sam 12:24).²⁷ Moreover, without touching upon the question whether or not a coronation name was as customary in the kingdoms of Judah and Israel as it was in Egypt, in this case there is good reason to think that Yedidyah was a regnal or royal name. The purpose and meaning of this name and the phrase “and the Lord loved him,” should be understood in three complementary contexts: (a) within the immediate context in which they appear, that is, 2 Samuel 10–12; (b) within the setting of Solomon’s entire story, which includes 1 Kings 1–2; and (c) within the broader surrounding ancient Near Eastern literary and historical context, among which the early biblical literature developed, and from which it cannot be separated. Let us turn our attention to these contexts in detail.

- (a) In the case of the birth of the first child, the narrator states: “the child that was begotten by *the wife of Uriah* to David” (2 Sam 12:15). This means that Bathsheba conceived David’s child while still wife to Uriah. The first child was the product of an adulterous liaison, and therefore a bastard. In the case of the second child, however, the narrator calls her “Bathsheba, *his* [i.e., David’s] *wife*” (2 Sam 12:24). She conceived the child as David’s legitimate wife,²⁸ and therefore Solomon was legitimate, and not a bastard.²⁹ Thus, the intention of the reports in 2 Samuel 12:15 and 12:24d–25

²⁶ See de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, p. 108. For the custom of giving a throne name in the ancient Near East, see H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1948), pp. 238, 246.

²⁷ Regarding which one of the parents gave the name to the child, see Chapter Five, §V.

²⁸ Compare David Kimchi’s commentary on 2 Sam 12:24.

²⁹ Is this the reason that the narrator stresses the well-known fact, “Bathsheba mother of Solomon” (בת-שבע אם-שלמה; 1 Kgs 1:11)? In other words, Bathsheba who is *wife of David* is also *mother of Solomon*. This implies that Solomon’s father was King David, that is, he has a legitimate royal lineage.

is, first and foremost, to contrast the case of the firstborn child, who was a result of the adulterous affair (and who became sick and died, as prophesied by Nathan, 2 Sam 12:14–23), with the case of the second-born child – Solomon – who was wholly legitimate. Attaching to Solomon the additional theophoric name Yedidyah and stating that he was beloved of the Lord (again, by Nathan the prophet), made clear to all that he was a legitimate child who would be privileged by divine care and survive (2 Sam 12:24d–25).³⁰ That is to say, although Nathan announced, “the sword shall not depart from your [i.e., David’s] house many years” (2 Sam 12:10), this newborn son would live, despite all the forthcoming crises.

- (b) At the same time, the additional name Yedidyah, together with the statement “and the Lord loved him,” are intended to bestow a divinely appointed *political and religious legitimization* upon Solomon’s accession to the throne, and to reject the accusations that many directed against him as a usurper.³¹ In this sense, the name Yedidyah functions as a kind of royal / regnal name. The story of Solomon’s rise to power in 1 Kings 1–2 is highlighted through the background of 2 Samuel 12:24–25. According to the Masoretic biblical text, Nathan supported Solomon as heir to the throne, together with the active involvement of his mother, David’s beloved wife Bathsheba (1 Kgs 1:11–31).³² Set against the background of the dramatic struggle between Solomon and Adonijah (1 Kgs 1:1–53; 2:13–25), the name Yedidyah together with the phrase “the Lord *loved* him” is to be interpreted, “the Lord *preferred* [or if you wish, *chose*] him”³³ at birth as the legitimate successor of

³⁰ Compare, for instance, H. W. Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary*, trans. J. S. Bowden Old Testament Library (London: SCM Press, 1964), p. 317.

³¹ A hint in this direction is seen in the narrator’s note: “He [i.e., Adonijah] was born next after Absalom” (1 Kgs 1:6), and in the phrase attributed to Solomon, saying, “he [i.e., Adonijah] is my elder brother” (1 Kgs 2:22). This implies that although Solomon belonged to the royal family, he was out of the royal line to the throne. Much clearer than these was the forthright accusation which Shimei son of Gera vented against David: “Out! Out! Murderer! Scoundrel! The Lord has returned upon you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead you have reigned” (2 Sam 16:7–8a; cf. 16:5–8). For further discussion, see Chapter Ten, §II.

³² See Chapter Ten, §II.

³³ The term בחר (“chose”) is used with the term אהב (“loved”) elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible; see, for example, Deut 7:6–8, ... לא מרבכם מכל העמים חשק יהוה בכם ויבחר בכם. ... כי מאהבת יהוה אתכם. ... (“the Lord your God has chosen you to be a special people to himself, above all peoples that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more

David. In other words, Solomon was the beloved and preferred of God himself and of his messenger (Nathan), and his king (David). As such Solomon did not rise to power illegitimately as a usurper through Nathan's activities, because already at birth the Lord himself chose him and was responsible for his accession to the throne. Moreover, this notion is clearly stated again in 1 Kings 2:15, where the narrator put the following words into Adonijah's mouth: "The kingdom is turned about, and has become my brother's; *for it was his from the Lord.*"³⁴ As if this were not enough, the narrator put the same notion also into Solomon's mouth, when the latter decided to put Adonijah to death because he asked for David's concubine, Abishag the Shunammite, as his wife.³⁵ Here Solomon admits that Adonijah is his "elder brother." However, in the same breath he stresses that the *Lord* is the one "*who has established me, and set me on the throne of David my father, and who has made me a house, as he promised*" (1 Kgs 2:24).³⁶

- (c) As mentioned previously, the biblical narrator does not furnish the reader with an explicit explanation for why the Lord should have loved the newborn child even before he had accomplished anything. On the one hand, the name and the phrase were included within the birth story as if to say that the child had been chosen because of his extraordinary *potential* qualities, his forthcoming leadership and achievements, namely, his great wisdom, Temple building, wealth, successful trade, and international diplomacy (roughly 1 Kgs 3–10). On the other hand, the story regarding the coronation of Solomon (1 Kgs 1:11–40) does not recount that he

in number than any people . . . but because *the Lord loved you* "). For God's love in Deuteronomy and its biblical and ancient Near Eastern settings, see Moran, "The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy," pp. 77–87, and additional references there.

³⁴ See also below, §IV, 2, A (a) regarding "Sargon of Akkad," and Chapter Ten, §III, 2. The notion that Solomon was a *legitimate* heir to the throne (rather than a usurper) was clearly expressed later by the Chronicler (e.g., 1 Chr 28:4–5; 2 Chr 1:9b), who recounts that Solomon was *chosen* by the Lord. For a detailed discussion and additional references, see Chapter Ten, §IV.

³⁵ The right to have the concubine(s) of the earlier king was saved only for his successor, see 2 Sam 3:7–8; 12:8b; 16:21; see also Gen 35:22. Therefore, Solomon declares to his mother: "Why do you ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom as well!"

³⁶ On this verse, see also as follows and cf. 1 Kgs 1:48; 3:7a; and 1 Kgs 5:19 [ET, 5:5] where Nathan's prophecy was interpreted explicitly regarding Solomon as Temple builder; and 10:9.

had received any additional throne or coronation name. Indeed, if the biblical narrator had stated in the coronation story that the new king was named Yediyah, then the political intention of such a statement would be very obvious to the audience. However, though the narrator does not explicitly invoke the name Yediyah or recall that “the Lord loved him” in 1 Kings 1–2, these texts are closely linked by the fact that Nathan is highlighted both as the one through whom the Lord gave the name in 2 Samuel 12:24d–25 and as the one who initiated and stood behind Solomon’s usurpation to the throne in 1 Kings 1:11–40.³⁷

By recounting that Solomon received the divine blessing and the name Yedidyah as an infant, the author indicates that he was chosen to be a king already in the earliest stage of his life.³⁸ Moreover, Solomon's statement in 1 Kings 2:24, חַי־יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר הֵכִנִּי וַיּוֹשִׁיעֵנִי / וַיּוֹשִׁיעֵנִי עַל-כֵּסֵא דָוִד אבִי וְאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לִי בֵית כֹּאשֶׁר דָּבַר (‘‘as the Lord lives, who has established me, and set me on the throne of David my father, and who has made me a house, as he promised’’) is presented as an allusion to and fulfillment of Nathan’s prophecy in 2 Samuel 7:11C–13, הִגִּיד לְךָ יְהוָה כִּיבֵּית יַעֲשֶׂה-לְךָ יְהוָה כִּי יִמְלֹאוּ יָמֶיךָ וּשְׁכַבְתָּ, אֶת-אַבְתָּיִךְ וְהִקִּמְתִּי אֶת-זֶרְעֶךָ אַחֲרָיִךְ אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִמֶּעֶיךָ וְהִכִּנֵּנִי אֶת-מַמְלַכְתּוֹ הוּא יִבְנֶה בֵּית אֶת-אֲבֹתֶיךָ וְהִקִּמְתִּי אֶת-זֶרְעֶךָ אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִמֶּעֶיךָ וְהִכִּנֵּנִי אֶת-מַמְלַכְתּוֹ עַד-עוֹלָם (‘‘the Lord says to you that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall proceed out of your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever’’).³⁹ That is to say, the narrator interpreted Nathan’s prophecy about the enduring House of David retrospectively as a

³⁷ Whether this name was actually given to Solomon at his coronation, or at his birth (as 2 Sam 12:24–25 implies), or only after his reign was established (which seems more likely), is difficult to confirm, because we have no other source within or outside of the Bible. Nevertheless, the focus here is first and foremost on literary and historiographical analysis.

³⁸ Cf. Ishida, *History and Historical Writing in Ancient Israel*, p. 156.

³⁹ The phrase *וַיְבָרֶךְ בֵּית לְשֹׁמֵי* seems to be a Deuteronomistic one, and possibly a late addition; see Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, p. 325, and the discussion by S. Ahituv, "Designation of Solomon to the Kingdom in the Biblical Historiography," in M. V. Fox et al. (eds.), *Texts, Temples, and Traditions: A Tribute to Menahem Haran* [in Hebrew] (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1996), pp. 1*–10* esp. 3*. Also, the word *לִי* in the phrase *וְאֶשֶׁר עָשָׂה לִי בֵּית כְּאֶשֶׁר דָּבַר* (1 Kgs 2:24) is difficult, because Solomon had just acceded to the throne and it makes no sense that he would already talk about his dynasty. Therefore, the suggestion of Ahituv (*ibid.*, p. 6*) to read here *לוֹ* (i.e., to David, an exchange of *ו* and *ל*, which are graphically similar) is reasonable.

reference to Solomon, who was divinely chosen to succeed his father's throne, even before he was born.⁴⁰ Therefore, the name Yedidyah and the expression of divine love for him point to that earlier choice.

This phenomenon is comparable to the assertions in the Assyrian royal inscriptions, where kings stress in their apologies that they were chosen by god(s) when they were very young or even while yet in their mothers' wombs. For example, Aššur-rēš-iši I (1132–1115 BCE), was declared to be one “whom the great gods, Anu, Enlil, and Ea, truly chose (lit. requested, when he was still) inside his mother.”⁴¹ Esarhaddon (681–669 BCE) describes himself as one “*whose name Aššur, Šamaš, Bēl and Nebû, Ištar of Nineveh and Ištar of Arbela have announced to reign over Assyria since he was a child (ultu šeḫerīšu)*” (Nineveh A I 5–7).⁴² He continues: “Although I was the youngest among my elder brothers, my father, upon the command of Aššur, Sin, Šamaš, Bēl and

⁴⁰ Cf. S. Zalewski, *Solomon's Ascension to the Throne: Studies in the Books of Kings and Chronicles* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Marcus, 1981), p. 27; Ahituv, “Designation of Solomon to the Kingdom in the Biblical Historiography,” pp. 6*, 8*. This notion is expressed explicitly by the late historian in 1 Chr 22:6–11 (an “addition”), as well as other sources; see in detail [Chapter Ten §IV](#). This phenomenon appears also regarding the Prophet Jeremiah (Jer 1:4–5), and so-called Second Isaiah (Isa 49:1); see I. Kalimi, “The Lord Called me from the Womb, Singled me out from my Mother's Bowels (Isa 49:1),” in Y. Hoffman (ed.), *Companion to the Biblical World: The Book of Isaiah* [in Hebrew] (Ramat Gan: Revivim, 1986), vol. 10, pp. 231–232; D. M. Pike “Before Jeremiah Was: Divine Election in the Ancient Near East,” in K. P. Jackson and A. C. Skinner (eds.), *A Witness for the Restoration: Essays in Honor of Robert J. Matthews* (Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2007), pp. 33–59.

⁴¹ See CAD, vol. 1 (A), part I, p. 146a, no. 2.

⁴² See R. Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons Königs von Assyrien*, Archiv für Orientforschung, Beiheft 9 (Graz: E. Weidner, 1956), §27 (Episode 1), pp. 39–40; see also the recent English edition in E. Leichty, *The Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon, King of Assyria (680–669 BC)*, The Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period 4 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), p. 11; cf. also A. L. Oppenheim, “Babylonian and Assyrian Historical Texts,” in J. B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament (ANET)*, 3rd ed. with suppl. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 265–317, esp. p. 289a. Similar claims were also made by, e.g., Adad-nirārī III and Nabonidus; cf. H. Tadmor, “Autobiographical Apology in the Royal Assyrian Literature,” in H. Tadmor and M. Weinfeld (eds.), *History, Historiography and Interpretation: Studies in Biblical and Cuneiform Literatures* (Jerusalem: Magnes / Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1983), pp. 36–57, esp. pp. 39–40, 48–49 (repr., idem, “With My Many Chariots I Have Gone up the Heights of Mountains”: *Historical and Literary Studies on Ancient Mesopotamia and Israel*, M. Cogan (ed.) (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2011), pp. 63–85; Ishida, *History and Historical Writing in Ancient Israel*, p. 145; and [Chapter Ten §IV](#). On Esarhaddon's and Nabonidus' apologies, see recently Knapp, *Royal Apologetic in the Ancient Near East*, pp. 301–357.

Nebû, Ištar of Nineveh and Ištar of Arbela, has chosen [lit. elevated] me, saying: ‘this is my crown-prince’” (Nineveh A I 8–12).⁴³ In another place he declares: “The great gods designated (me) king of the upper and 1 [ower] lands . . . (already) in the womb of my mother who bore me . . . for rule of all the lands.”⁴⁴ Aššurbanipal (668–627 BCE) declared: “I, Aššurbanipal . . . whom Aššur and Sin, the lord of the crown, already in the distant past had called by name for ruling, and already in his mother’s womb had created him for the shepherding of Assyria.”⁴⁵

Similarly, the biblical narrative reports that Nathan was sent by the Lord to call the child Yedidyah shortly after his birth. However, from the historical viewpoint the name and the phrase are a divinely authorized apology for Solomon to legitimize his throne usurpation. As such, 2 Samuel 12:24d–25, and the assertions of Adonijah and Solomon in 1 Kings 2:15, 24 are *post-eventum* characterizations. This case of Solomon correlates well in general with biblical historiographical method, where frequently a divine election is claimed, *post eventum*, to justify either a usurpation, or the problematic succession of a king. For example, the prophet Samuel chose David from among his brothers to replace King Saul (1 Sam 16:1–13).⁴⁶ David’s usurpation was justified by describing it as a divine election that took place after the divine rejection of Saul

⁴³ See Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons Königs von Assyrien*, §27 (Episode 2), p. 40; cf. Leichty, *The Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon*, pp. 11–12; Oppenheim, “Babylonian and Assyrian Historical Texts,” *ANET*, p. 289a.

⁴⁴ See Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons König von Assyrien*, p. 115, §82:7–10; D. D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), vol. 2, p. 223, §571; Leichty, *The Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon*, p. 91.

⁴⁵ See M. Streck, *Assurbanipal und die letzten assyrischen Könige bis zum Untergange Nineveh’s*, Vorderasiatische Bibliothek ; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1916), vol. 2, I:1–5; pp. 2 (text), and 3 (translation). For additional examples and more details, see G. Cooke, “The Israelite King as Son of God,” *ZAW* 73 (1961), pp. 202–225; S. M. Paul, “Deutero-Isaiah and Cuneiform Royal Inscriptions,” *JAOS* 88 (1968), pp. 181–186 (repr. in idem, *Divrei Shalom: Collected Studies of Shalom M. Paul on the Bible and the Ancient Near East, 1967–2005*, Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 23 [Leiden: Brill, 2005], pp. 11–22); Kalimi, “The Lord Called me from the Womb, Singled me out from my Mother’s Bowels (Isa 49:1),” pp. 231–232; Pike, “Before Jeremiah Was: Divine Election in the Ancient Near East,” pp. 33–59. Later, the phenomenon also was used by the evangelist Matthew regarding Jesus: “She [i.e., Mary] will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (Matt 1:21; cf. Luke 2:21). The Rabbis also affirmed that the name of the Messiah was one of “seven things . . . created before the world was created” (e.g., Babylonian Talmud, *Pesachim* 54a); see I. Kalimi, *Fighting Over the Bible: Jewish Interpretation and Polemic from Temple to Talmud and Beyond*, Brill Reference Library of Judaism 54 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2017), p. 26, note 23.

⁴⁶ See also the biblical references listed in §I, p. 165.

because of his sins (1 Sam 15:19, 23b, 26–28; 16:1, see also 1 Chr 10:13–14). Furthermore, the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite justified Jeroboam I (ben Nebat) as king over the northern tribes of Israel (1 Kgs 11–12; 14); the prophecies of Elisha validated the military leader Jehu as king of Israel instead of Jehoram (2 Kgs 9–10); and Hazael as king of Aram, instead of Ben-Hadad II (i.e., Hadadezer; 2 Kgs 8:7–13).⁴⁷ In principle, the giving of the second name to Solomon and the note that the Lord loves him (as well as other assertions in 1 Kings that God chose Solomon) are equivalent to those accounts of the divine election of kings.

Such royal apologies are thus common in the Bible and the ancient Near East, but we can also go further. Not only the general motif of divine election, but also the specific elements of divine *love* and the giving of a new name found in 2 Samuel 12:24d–25 are also paralleled in a number of other biblical and ancient Near Eastern sources. In that light, both the second name and the emphasis on the Lord's love stress Solomon's status not only as a legitimate child of his parents (not a bastard), but a divinely legitimated monarch (not a violent usurper). The following section presents further examples.

IV. NEW NAMES, GOD'S LOVE, AND ROYAL APOLOGIA: THE BIBLICAL AND ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN SOURCES

1. *Biblical Sources*

While there are no biblical references to God's "love" for any other king in Israel or Judah but Solomon (cf. Neh 13:26),⁴⁸ there is at least one other biblical example of a king who was given a new name when he took the throne through unusual means: A little over a decade before the destruction of Jerusalem in 587/6 BCE, Nebuchadnezzar II, king of Babylonia, replaced Jehoiachin, the legitimate king of Judah whom he exiled to Babylon (598 BCE), with his uncle Mathaniah, the third son of Josiah (1 Chr 3:15). Because Mathaniah was not the legitimate king,

⁴⁷ Though the Tel Dan Inscription does not explicitly respond to claims of illegitimacy, its affirmation of Hazael: "Hadad [ma]de m[e] king – me! And Hadad went before me" (lines 4–5) implies a similar divine legitimation for this (according to the biblical sources) usurper. See Weippert, *Historisches Textbuch zum Alten Testament*, pp. 266–269, esp. p. 268; Knapp, *Royal Apologetic in the Ancient Near East*, pp. 276–300.

⁴⁸ This reference, as well as the rewritten counter-account of Solomon's birth and names in the Chronistic history, are discussed in [Chapter Seven](#).

Nebuchadnezzar changed his name to “Zedekiah,” that is, “the Lord made just” or “the Lord is my legitimation/right” (2 Kgs 24:8–17).

2. *Ancient near Eastern Sources*

Though commentators on 2 Samuel have generally struggled to understand the significance of the name Yedidyah and its role in the text, they overlook that the name corresponds to various epithets that reflect the love of god(s) for a king in ancient Mesopotamian and Egyptian inscriptions. For example, the expression “beloved of [divine name]” (ki.ág-DN or *narām*-DN) is used to describe numerous Mesopotamian kings from Sumerian times onward,⁴⁹ while a similar expression (*mr*-[*n*]-DN) was also attributed to most of the Egyptian kings, as mentioned earlier. Against that background, the understanding of Yedidyah as “beloved of the Lord” reflects widespread custom for describing divine patronage of kings across the ancient surrounding cultures. These titles are applied both to expected royal successors and to those who took the throne through unusual means.

Moreover, the setting of the name Yedidyah and the phrase “and the Lord loved him” against the background of Solomon’s throne succession (despite not being next in the royal line),⁵⁰ are paralleled – both in content and formulation – by the stories told of several kings in the ancient Near East who gained their kingship by violent usurpation, putsch / coup, or becoming a king without being part of a royal line to the throne. The latter attempted to legitimize their kingship in literary writing(s), which share several features with Solomon’s succession narrative. In his study, “Autobiographical Apology in the Royal Assyrian Literature,” Hayim Tadmor focuses on the Neo-Assyrian king-apologies, particularly the autobiographical compositions of Esarhaddon (681–669 BCE; discussed previously), his son Aššurbanipal (668–627 BCE), and Šamši-adad V (824–811 BCE; in this order!). He states that in all three cases, “the Assyrian king was describing his accession at a time he was about to appoint his successor . . . a powerful queen-mother seems to have meddled

⁴⁹ See particularly, W. W. Hallo, *Early Mesopotamian Royal Titles: A Philologic and Historical Analysis*, American Oriental Series 43 (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1957), pp. 132–142; M.-J. Seux, *Épithètes Royales Akkadiennes et Sumériennes* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1967), pp. 189–197.

⁵⁰ See in detail, [Chapter Ten](#), §§II–III.

in the issue of succession and acted as co-regent.”⁵¹ Tadmor also points out the brief apology of the Persian king, Xerxes I (most likely the biblical Ahasuerus; 485–465 BCE).⁵² In addition, it is worth mentioning here those usurpers from the northwest Semitic world who justified themselves in their autobiographical accounts by claiming that gods had appointed them to their thrones, such as: Idrimi king of Alalah (ca. 1450–1400 BCE), Kilamuwa king of Ya'dy/Sam'al (modern Zinjirli; ca. 850 BCE), and Zakir king of Hamat and Lu'ath (ca. 780 BCE),⁵³ and the above-mentioned Hazael of Damascus.

The following sections concentrate particularly on examples that offer the closest parallels to 2 Samuel 12:24d–25 and 1 Kings 2:15, 24, which are overlooked by Tadmor, Knapp, and others.⁵⁴ These include texts from Mesopotamia regarding King Sargon of Akkad (/ Akkade / Agade; see §IV, 2, A, a), and most likely also regarding the Neo-Assyrian king, Sargon II (§IV, 2, A, b). Similar motifs also occur in sources from contemporary, neighboring non-Semitic cultures, namely in the apology of the Hittite king, Hattušili III (§IV, 2, B); about the Egyptian Queen Hatshepsut, and a number of other Pharaohs (§IV, 2, C);⁵⁵ as well as in the inscription of Xerxes I of Persia (§IV, 2, D). Let's observe these cases explicitly:

A. Mesopotamia: Sargon of Akkad and Sargon II of Ashur

The biblical nominal form סרגון (“Sargon”; Isa 20:1) has become an accepted term in the scholarship on the Assyrian king, Šarru-kīn II (722/1–705 BCE),⁵⁶ the founder of the Neo-Assyrian Sargonid dynasty, whose

⁵¹ See Tadmor, “Autobiographical Apology in the Royal Assyrian Literature,” pp. 36–57, esp. pp. 54, 57.

⁵² See Tadmor, *ibid.*, p. 57; cf. Oppenheim, “Babylonian and Assyrian Historical Texts,” *ANET*, p. 315b.

⁵³ See Donner and Röllig, *Kanaanäische und Aramäische Inschriften*, vol. 1, no. 24 (pp. 4–5; Kilamuwa), no. 202 (p. 47–48; Zakir); Pritchard, *ANET*, pp. 557–558 (Idrimi), 654b (Kilamuwa), and 655b (Zakir).

⁵⁴ For example, T. Longman III, *Fictional Akkadian Autobiography: A Generic and Comparative Study* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1991), pp. 53–60, 215–216.

⁵⁵ On parallel apologetic biographies and pseudo-autobiographies in Greek sources, see A. Momigliano, *The Development of Greek Biography* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 58–60.

⁵⁶ On the name of the Neo-Assyrian king, see A. Fuchs, “Šarru-kēnu, Šarru-kīn, Šarru-ukīn,” in H. Baker (ed.), *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire*, Publications of the Foundation for Finnish Assyriological Research 4 (Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2011), vol. 3/II, pp. 1239–1247, esp. p. 1239. An Aramaic seal from the time of Sargon II mentions the king's name in form of *srgn*, see *idem*, “Sargon II,” in

birth name is unknown. This form of the name is also accepted by scholars for Šarru-kīn⁵⁷ of Akkad (ca. 2334–2279 BCE),⁵⁸ the founder of the Sargonic Old Akkadian dynasty. The origin as well as the birth name of the latter are also unknown.⁵⁹

The name Šarru-kīn means “the king is legitimate” or “the legitimate/true king.” It is considered to be a throne-name adopted by the new king who was, in fact, a usurper who had no legitimate right to the throne, or who was not in line for the throne and thus of doubtful legitimacy. By adopting such a name, the new king wished to reinforce his right to claim the kingship.⁶⁰

E. Ebeling, B. Meissner, et al. (eds.) *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2009–2011), vol. 12, pp. 51–61, esp. p. 52.

⁵⁷ The transcription of Sargon’s name does not contain the usual spelling. In Sumerian documents the name was written: Šar-um-GI, in Akkadian texts: Šar-ru-GI; in Ur III sources it is written as: ^dŠar-ru-gin₂, see J. G. Westenholz, “The Memory of Sargonic Kings under the Third Dynasty of Ur,” in P. Michalowski (ed.), *On the Third Dynasty of Ur: Studies in Honor of Marcel Sigrist* (Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2008), pp. 251–260, esp. pp. 253–254, and further references there. Westenholz concludes that the writing of the name reflects “a phonetic rendering rather than learned lettering.” In fact, the spelling of the name of Narām-Sîn’s father, Maništūsu, also changes (*ibid.*, pp. 253, 254). Still, the answer to the question “Why his name was written *sar-um-GI* in Sumerian sources,” should not be described as “a mystery,” contra W. Sallaberger and A. Westenholz, *Mesopotamien: Akkade-Zeit und Ur III-Zeit*, *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* 160/3 (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag / Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), p. 34. See further, W. Sommerfeld, “Sargon,” in E. Ebeling, B. Meissner et al. (eds.), *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie* (Berlin: W. De Gruyter, 2009–2011), vol. 12, pp. 44–49, esp. pp. 44–45.

⁵⁸ For the date and long reign of Sargon of Akkad (fifty-five years), see W. von Soden, *The Ancient Orient: An Introduction to the Study of the Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1994), p. 48. For another suggestion, see A. L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), p. 398.

⁵⁹ On Sargon of Akkad, and his military and political achievements, as well as his imprint on Mesopotamian literature, history and political concepts, see A. K. Grayson, “The Empire of Sargon of Akkad,” *AfO* 25 (1974–1977), pp. 56–64; Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, pp. 398–399 (Akkad), p. 413; D. O. Edzard, *Geschichte Mesopotamiens: Von den Sumerern bis zu Alexander dem Großen* (München: C. H. Beck, 2004), pp. 77–83; M. Heinz, “Sargon of Akkad: Rebel and Usurper in Kish,” *Representation of Political Power: Case Histories from Times of Change and Dissolving Order in the Ancient Near East* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2007), pp. 67–86.

⁶⁰ Cf. Edzard, *Geschichte Mesopotamiens*, p. 78. However, Sallaberger and Westenholz (*Mesopotamien: Akkade-Zeit und Ur III-Zeit*, p. 34) assert: “Sargon may well have been called Sargon from his birth.”

(a) Sargon of Akkad

The historical background of Sargon of Akkad is very vague. The closest parallels to Solomon's birth story are found in an Akkadian poetic (pseudo-) autobiographical or apologetic story, known as the Sargon Birth Legend.⁶¹ The existing *copies* of the Birth Legend are relatively late: Two (Texts A and B) are written in Neo-Assyrian script from the library of Aššurbanipal (668–627 BCE); one (Text C), which contains the first six lines of the legend, might be derived from a Neo-Assyrian copy (an exercise tablet); and one fragment (Text D) is written in Standard Babylonian dialect in Neo-Assyrian script.⁶² Although a late date of the fragments does not necessarily mean that the original composition of the legend itself is also late, there is no solid evidence for dating the original composition. Consequently, a number of scholars date the legend sometime within the first half of the second millennium BCE (generally, the Old Babylonian period), while others date it as late as the Neo-Assyrian period.⁶³ Without additional evidence, it will be hard to reach any definitive conclusion; however, it is not impossible that the Sargon Birth Legend reflects a much older tradition than the date of the copies that have been preserved.

According to the Birth Legend, Sargon was born to a priestess (*ēntu*),⁶⁴ in the town Azupiranu, which is located on the bank of the Euphrates

⁶¹ For the legend, see B. Lewis, *The Sargon Legend: A Study of the Akkadian Text and the Tale of the Hero Who Was Exposed at Birth*, American Society of Oriental Research Dissertation Series 4 (Cambridge: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1980); E. A. Speiser, "The Legend of Sargon," ANET, p. 119a-b; B. R. Foster, "The Birth Legend of Sargon of Akkad," in W. W. Hallo and K. L. Younger, Jr. (eds.), *The Context of Scripture* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), vol. 1, p. 461. For definitions of the text under review, see Lewis, *ibid.*, pp. 87–93, with earlier bibliography.

⁶² See Lewis, *The Sargon Legend*, pp. 11–23; Longman, *Fictional Akkadian Autobiography*, pp. 53–54, and cf. Speiser, "The Legend of Sargon," p. 119a. Westenholz is of the opinion that "it was the Babylonian tradition that formed the basis for the copies of the Legend in Aššurbanipal's library – most of his texts were derived from Babylonian originals"; see J. G. Westenholz, "Review of *The Sargon Legend* by B. Lewis," JNES 43 (1984), pp. 73–79, esp. p. 74. Moreover, "a Sumerian literary fragment from Uruk (TCL 16 73), also contains a reference to some similar birth story of Sargon, unfortunately badly broken" (*ibid.*, p. 75 the latter text is discussed in the last paragraph of this section).

⁶³ See Lewis, *The Sargon Legend*, pp. 97–101, and additional bibliographical references there.

⁶⁴ Childs states that "Sargon's claim of an *ēntu* as a mother automatically implied that his father was a king (... which point[s] to some form of *hieros gamos*) ... It functions to legitimize Sargon by claiming a royal ancestry"; see B. S. Childs, "The Birth of Moses," JBL 84 (1965), pp. 109–122, esp. pp. 109–110; idem, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster John

(though its exact location is unknown). The legend goes on to state that Sargon was abandoned as a baby and miraculously rescued from a basket sailing down the Euphrates by a water-drawer called Aqqi (/ Akki). The latter pulled Sargon out of the river, adopted him as his son, and made him a gardener (lines 2–12, the prologue). The Sumerian text discussed at the end of this section recounts that, mysteriously, Sargon ended up as cupbearer of Urzababa, the king of Kish (ca. 80 km south of Baghdad).⁶⁵ From this position he rebelled against Urzababa and became his successor.⁶⁶

The motif of an abandoned child from a low social stratum who ascended to a high political position is well known and most likely foretells the rise of a national leader. A similar incident also appears in legends regarding the rescue of Moses: “She got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river [i.e., the Nile].” Later, Moses became the leader and legislator of the Israelites (Exod 2:1–10, esp. 3);⁶⁷ and regarding Cyrus II (the Great; 559–530 BCE), the founder of the Persian Achaemenid Empire (Herodotus, *Historia* 1.108; Nicolaus of Damascus, Fragment 66.2–4).⁶⁸ The rise of a gardener to kingship was

Knox, 1974), pp. 9–11, esp. p. 9 (in this regard Childs also cites the article of H. G. Güterbock, “Die historische Tradition und ihre literarische Gestaltung bei Babyloniern und Hethitern bis 1200,” *ZA* 42 [1934], pp. 1–91; Part 2: 44 [1938], pp. 45–145); C. Cohen, “Hebrew *tbh*: Proposed Etymologies,” *JANESCU* 4 (1972), pp. 37–51, esp. pp. 46–51 (Excursus: “The Legend of Sargon and the Birth of Moses”). However, Sargon himself confesses that he was a “son of nobody” (*mār lā mammānim*); see Ishida, *The Royal Dynasties in Ancient Israel*, p. 7 and the references cited there. Moreover, Sargon’s statements that his mother bore him “in secret” and “my father I knew not” show that he was an illegitimate child and therefore concealed.

⁶⁵ On Kish, see the comprehensive study of M. Gibson, *The City and Area of Kish* (Coconut Grove: Field Research Projects, 1972), and P. R. S. Moorey, *Kish Excavations 1923–1933: With a Microfiche Catalogue of the Objects in Oxford Excavated by the Oxford–Field Museum, Chicago Expedition to Kish in Iraq, 1923–1933* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978).

⁶⁶ Cf. Heinz, “Sargon of Akkad: Rebel and Usurper in Kish,” p. 67.

⁶⁷ On this issue, see the detailed discussion by M. Gerhards, *Die Aussetzungsgeschichte des Mose*, Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 109 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2006), pp. 149–249.

⁶⁸ See F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1926), vol. 2, pp. 361–362 (no. 90: “Nikolaos von Damaskos”). Robert Drews stresses: “The bare bones of Nicolaus’s story of Cyrus must reflect a genuine Babylonian tradition . . . Cyrus was a homeless child, became a gardener on the king’s estate, then a cupbearer to the king, and then king”; see R. Drews, “Sargon, Cyrus and Mesopotamian Folk History,” *JNES* 33 (1974), pp. 387–393, esp. pp. 391–392. The motif of putting a child (or children) in a basket sailing down the river is also known from

a favorite theme of Mesopotamian writers.⁶⁹ Nonetheless, the assertion that ends the prologue of the Sargon Birth Legend (column i, lines 12–13) is particularly interesting for this study:

During my garden work, *Ištar loved me* [^dIš-tar lu-u i-ra-man-ni-(ma)],
(so that) 55 years I ruled as king.⁷⁰

Following this assertion, the legend tells of the activities and achievements of Sargon (lines 14–32): He founded the first empire, from the “Upper Sea” (the Mediterranean) to the “Lower Sea” (the Persian Gulf).⁷¹ The succession of Urzababa by Sargon was therefore justified or legitimized through the assertion “*Ištar loved me*. ” In other words, the kingship was given to Sargon by the gods, especially by his divine protector, Inanna / Ištar, the chief goddess of Kish (and later also of Agade, the capital of the Akkadian Empire).⁷² In fact, the description of Sargon as “beloved of

the Hittite literature: It is recounted that the queen of Kanish put her thirty sons in baskets sailing down the river (a branch of River Halys), and the gods saved and adopted them. See I. Singer, *The Hittites and Their Civilization*, Biblical Encyclopedia Library 26 [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2009), pp. 245–246, with additional bibliographical references.

⁶⁹ Additional examples: “Ir-ra-imitti, the king, installed Bel-ibni, the gardener, on his throne as a ‘substitute king’.” Bel-ibni (known also as Enlil-bani) was a king of the First Dynasty of Isin. For Cyrus as gardener on the king’s estate: see Oppenheim, “Babylonian and Assyrian Historical Texts,” *ANET*, p. 267; Drews, “Sargon, Cyrus and Mesopotamian Folk History,” pp. 387–393, esp. p. 389–390 for a discussion as well as further bibliography. Similarly, Saul was a cowherd (1 Sam 11:5) and David was a shepherd (1 Sam 16:11, 19; Ps 78:70: “And he chose David his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds”) before they became kings.

⁷⁰ See Lewis, *The Sargon Legend*, p. 25; Speiser, “The Legend of Sargon,” p. 119b; Foster, “The Birth Legend of Sargon of Akkad,” p. 461a.

⁷¹ Compare Ps 72:8, “May he have dominion also *from sea to sea*,” regarding the borders of Solomonic dominion; and see also Zech 9:10.

⁷² The Sumerian goddess Inan(n)a, who acted on behalf of Sargon, was a cosmological deity represented by the planet Venus, and the chief goddess of Kish, Uruk, and later also Agade. She “was known throughout the Mesopotamian world. The Akkadians (and later the Assyro-Babylonians) called her Ištar. For both, the Sumerians and the Akkadians, she was the principal goddess in their respective pantheons. Inanna / Ištar’s closest counterparts to the west are the Canaanite Astarte and later goddess of Greece and Rome, Aphrodite and Venus,” see G. Pettinato, “Inanna,” in L. Jones (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd ed. (Detroit: Macmillan, 2005), pp. 4402–4406, esp. p. 4402; D. Wolkstein and S. N. Kramer, *Inanna: Queen of Heaven and Earth, Her Stories and Hymns from Sumer* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983); W. Meinhold, *Ištar in Aššur: Untersuchung eines Lokalkultes von ca. 2500 bis 614 v. Chr.*, *Alter Orient und Altes Testament* 367 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2009); see also J. S. Cooper and W. Heimpel, “The Sumerian Sargon Legend,” *JAOS* 103 (1983), pp. 67–82, esp. p. 79, note 7.

Inanna” is already attested in an Old Babylonian inscription, which reads: “I, Sargon, beloved of Inanna [*narām*-^dINANNA], who roamed through all the four quarters.”⁷³ Inanna’s / Ištar’s love for Sargon is the source of his legitimacy for succession to the throne, power, and authority.⁷⁴

In front of us, therefore, is one of the clearest examples of an apologetic story about a usurper who claimed legitimacy due to receiving divine love and election. This motif offers a close parallel for what is said about Solomon in the Succession Narrative: He was named Yedidyah (i.e., “beloved of the Lord”), and “the Lord loved him.” He succeeded to David’s throne, though he was not next in the royal line.

That similar stories were already told about Sargon, long before the Neo-Assyrian period, is also supported by a Sumerian legend recounting Sargon’s rise to power. It affirms that the gods, particularly Inanna, had announced the end of Urzababa’s rule over Kish, and introduced their new preference, namely Sargon. The story predicts the death of Urzababa, and emphasizes Inanna’s protection of Sargon, but unfortunately it breaks off before its ending.⁷⁵ Jerrold S. Cooper and Wolfgang Heimpel conclude correctly that there is a didactic tendency in this story, like many – if not all – of the Sumerian historical-literary texts. That is to say, “destiny determined by the gods, is unavoidable, and not to be resisted.”⁷⁶ Indeed, Sargon became king of Kish despite Urzababa’s best efforts to prevent this, and despite the war that Lugalzagesi waged against him. In any case, this is clearly an apologetic story that attempts to legitimize Sargon’s usurpation. In other words, this implicit message is similar to the explicit statement in the biblical text, which is ascribed to Adonijah (see §III, b), after his failure in struggling with Solomon, the one who was not in line for David’s throne: “the kingdom was mine . . . but

⁷³ J. G. Westenholz, *Legends of the Kings of Akkade: The Texts*, Mesopotamian Civilizations 7 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997), pp. 34–35. On the expression “beloved of [divine name],” see §IV, 2, pp. 182–183.

⁷⁴ In “Review of *The Sargon Legend* by B. Lewis,” pp. 78–79, Westenholz interprets Ištar’s love as an expression of military victories in battle, without illuminating additional sense (s) for it. By contrast, my interpretation of Ištar’s love in the Sargon Legend better fits the context in which the phrase appears, and is also supported by comparative literature of surrounding ancient Near Eastern cultures. In any case, Ištar’s love for Sargon should not be explained as sexual love, as Lewis believes (*The Sargon Legend*, pp. 59, 95–96). As Westenholz correctly states, “Any sexual overtones can only be read into the text but cannot be read out of it” (*ibid.*, p. 79).

⁷⁵ See Cooper and Heimpel, “The Sumerian Sargon Legend,” pp. 67–82.

⁷⁶ See Cooper and Heimpel, “The Sumerian Sargon Legend,” p. 74.

the kingdom is turned about, and has become my brother's; *for it was his from the Lord* " (1 Kgs 2:15).⁷⁷

(b) Sargon II of Ashur

As mentioned earlier (§IV, 2, A, a), the *copies* of the Birth Legend of Sargon the Great are relatively late. If the Birth Legend was composed for the first time in the Neo-Assyrian period, its primary purpose would be to promote the legitimacy of the contemporary usurper, Sargon II (722/1–705 BCE), by identifying him with one of the greatest Mesopotamian kings who carried the same name and whose own royal origin was uncertain. This intention would also account for purposely obtaining the unusual throne-name Šarru-kīn with its connotations and deep-rooted associations. All these fit Sargon II, whose accession is mysterious and whose legitimacy on the Assyrian throne was very questionable,⁷⁸ since, in all likelihood, he was not in direct line to be king. As Sidney Smith stressed long ago, although there is a possibility of Sargon's belonging "to a family descended from kings, as Esarhaddon actually claims," for a variety of good reasons he is believed to have been a usurper.⁷⁹ Sargon became king just after the rebellion of Assyrian citizens against Shalmaneser V (727–722 BCE) and his murder. In the so-called "Ashur Charter," Sargon recounts that Shalmaneser V "wrongfully imposed corvée on the city of Ashur, with the result that the gods deposed him and appointed Sargon as *legitimate* king."⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Interestingly, a similar notion appears also later on in the Greek historiography. Herodotus states: "None may escape his destined lot, not even a god" (*Historia* 1.91; cf. 1.7–13).

⁷⁸ See Lewis, *The Sargon Legend*, p. 103, and cf. S. Smith, "The Supremacy of Assyria," *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 1st ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925), vol. 3/1, pp. 32–60, esp. p. 46; Foster, "The Birth Legend of Sargon of Akkad," p. 461; M. van de Mieroop, "Sargon of Akkad and His Successors in Anatolia," *Studi Micenei ed Egeo-Anatolici* 42 (2000), pp. 133–159, esp. p. 133–134: "the Assyrians referred to Sargon throughout their history. This may be easily understood as an aspect of the cultural tradition that unified Mesopotamia, which enabled a king of Assyria in the seventh [*sic*; *leg.*: eighth] century, Sargon II, to portray himself to his subject as a worthy namesake of an ancient ruler."

⁷⁹ See Smith, "The Supremacy of Assyria," p. 45; more recently, Fuchs, "Šarru-kēnu, Šarru-kīn, Šarru-ukīn," p. 1240. For the various possible connections of Sargon II to the Assyrian royal family, see Fuchs, "Sargon II," p. 53. See also A. K. Grayson, "Assyria: Tiglath-pileser III to Sargon II (744–705 B. C.)," in J. Boardman et al. (eds.), *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), vol. 3/2, pp. 71–102, esp. p. 87–88.

⁸⁰ See Grayson, "Assyria: Tiglath-pileser III to Sargon II (744–705 B. C.)," p. 87.

However, as stated earlier, it is likely that the Sargon legends derive from traditions reaching back to the 2nd millennium BCE, and were not invented from whole cloth to legitimate Sargon II. Still, even if they were first composed in the Old Babylonian period, their continued copying and use in the time of Sargon II served to legitimate the Neo-Assyrian monarch as well. To cite Marc van de Mieroop, “Unless we believe that there was a mindless copying of the texts [i.e., the accounts of Sargon’s Birth Legend that are available to us now] because of antiquarian interests, there should have been a relevance to them when they were written.”⁸¹

There is an additional feature that binds Sargon of Akkad and Sargon II: Neither king wished to be identified with the old political capital in which he began his usurpation. Therefore, each of them established a new capital: Sargon the Great moved his capital from Kish to the new city he built, namely Agade (or Akkad).⁸² Henceforth, he identified himself as “Sargon King of Agade / Akkad.”⁸³ Sargon II founded a new capital in a place that had been in no way inhabited before, and named it after himself, Dūr-Šarru-kīn (“Fortress of Sargon”; modern Khorsabad).⁸⁴

⁸¹ M. van de Mieroop, “Literature and Political Discourse in Ancient Mesopotamia: Sargon II of Assyria and Sargon of Agade,” in B. Böck, E. Cancik-Kirschbaum and T. Richter (eds.), *Minuscula Mesopotamica, Festschrift für Johannes Renger*, *Alt Orient und Altes Testament* 267 (Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 1999), pp. 327–339, esp. p. 329. It is noteworthy that possibly some other usurpers, such as Sargon I of Assyria (early second millennium), also imitated Sargon of Agade; see van de Mieroop, “Sargon of Akkad and His Successors in Anatolia,” pp. 144–145.

⁸² Akkad – after the biblical Hebrew spelling in Gen 10:10. The exact location of the city is unknown.

⁸³ The Sumerian King List refers to “Sargon, the king of Akkad, the man who built Akkad”; see J.-J. Glassner, *Chroniques mésopotamiennes* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1993), p. 140; S. Franke, *Königsinschriften und Königsideologie: Die Könige von Akkade zwischen Tradition und Neuerung* (Hamburg: LIT Verlag, 1995), p. 94; Heinz, “Sargon of Akkad: Rebel and Usurper in Kish,” pp. 68, 74–75.

⁸⁴ See, for example, A. Fuchs, *Die Inschriften Sargons II. aus Khorsabad* (Göttingen: Cuvillier, 1994), pp. 37–38, and 292–293, lines 34–43; S. Parpola, “The Construction of Dūr-Šarru-kīn in the Assyrian Royal Correspondence,” in A. Caubet (ed.), *Khorsabad: le palais de Sargon II, roi d’Assyrie* (Paris: Documentation française, 1995), pp. 47–77; van de Mieroop, “Literature and Political Discourse in Ancient Mesopotamia,” pp. 334–339; V. A. Hurowitz, “Fort Sargon (Dūr-Šarru-kīn): A Portrait of the Royal Builder,” in I. Eph’al and N. Na’aman (eds.), *Royal Assyrian Inscriptions: History, Historiography and Ideology* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Science and Humanities, 2009), pp. 25–52. Most likely, Dūr-Šarru-kīn should be identified with the biblical “Resen” (Gen 10:12), see V. A. Hurowitz, “In Search of Resen (Genesis 10:12): Dūr-Šarru-kīn?” in C. Cohen et al. (eds.), *Birkat Shalom: Studies in the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern Literature, and Postbiblical Judaism Presented to Shalom M. Paul on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008), vol. 1,

In fact, the founding of a new capital was not exclusive to usurpers, but it was typical for some usurpers in other parts of the ancient Near Eastern world. For example, David captured Jerusalem, rebuilt it, renamed it after himself, and made it the capital of the Israelite United Monarchy; Omri, king of Israel, established Samaria; Cyrus II of Persia founded Pasargadae, and Darius I founded Persepolis. All these kings were usurpers.⁸⁵ This is a point where Solomon *differs* from the common motif. Perhaps he did not found a new capital because he wanted to emphasize continuity with David rather than a radical break (a motivation also reflected, for instance in "David's Testament," and the Davidic preparations for the Temple-building, especially in Chronicles).

B. Anatolia: King Ḫattušili III of Ḫatti Land

The autobiography – or so-called apology – of the Hittite king, Ḫattušili III (1267–ca. 1240 BCE) was composed within a decade after his succession,⁸⁶ some time after the peace treaty between Ḫattušili and his

pp. 511–524; A. van der Kooij, "Nimrod, A Mighty Hunter before the Lord!": Assyrian Royal Ideology as Perceived in the Hebrew Bible," *JS* 21 (2012), pp. 1–27, esp. p. 7.

⁸⁵ In some detail: David, usurper of King Saul, captured Jerusalem, rebuilt it, renamed it "City of David" after himself, and moved his capital there from Hebron (2 Sam 5:4–9; although Hebron was not the political residency of the former king, but rather a tribal holy city of Judah, where David established himself). Omri, king of Israel, was certainly not in line for the throne. According to 1 Kgs 16:15–20, he was a general for the legitimate king, Elah, and only claimed the kingship after Elah and his entire house were murdered by Zimri, who in turn committed suicide rather than face Omri's retaliation (1 Kgs 16:8–20). Omri then defeated another rival for the throne (Tibni; 1 Kgs 16:21–22), founded "Samaria," and moved his capital there from Tirzah (1 Kgs 16:23–29). Cyrus II (the Great) the king of Anshan was a vassal of Astyages king of Media. He rebelled against him (553 BCE), and finally replaced him (550 BCE), established a new city – Pasargadae – and shortly after he moved his capital there. Darius I (the Great; 522–485 BCE) rose to the Persian throne by defeating the so-called Magus usurper of Bardiya (son of Cyrus the Great and the younger brother of Cambyses II). In ca. 518 BCE he founded a new capital – Persepolis, alongside the four other existing capitals of the Achaemenid Empire; see T. C. Young, "The Early History of the Medes and the Persians and the Achaemenid Empire to the Death of Cambyses," in J. Boardman et al. (eds.), *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), vol. 4, pp. 1–52, esp. pp. 28–30; I. Kalimi, "Persepolis," *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, K. D. Sakenfeld (ed.) (Nashville: Abingdon, 2009), vol. 4, pp. 450–451.

⁸⁶ On this king, see A. Ünal, *Ḫattušili III* (Heidelberg: Karl Winter Universität Verlag, 1974); T. P. J. van den Hout, "Ḫattušili III, King of Hittites," in J. M. Sasson (ed.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* (New York: Scribner, 1995), vol. 2, pp. 1107–1120.

contemporary, Pharaoh Ramesses (/ Ramses) II of Egypt, in 1259 BCE (§12b).⁸⁷ In this apology, Hattušili recounts in detail how he rose to power, and provides a divine legitimization for his usurpation over the Hatti Land. He states that his father, Muršili II, had three sons and one daughter. Though Hattušili was the third son and the fourth and youngest child of his father, he became the king of Hatti Land, because of “*Ištar’s divine providence*.” According to the text, Ištar saved his life by making him her priest:

As I was still *a boy* . . . Ištar, My Lady, sent Muwatalli, my brother to Muršili, my father, through a dream (saying): “For Hattušili the years (are) short, he will not live (long). Hand him over to me [i.e., Ištar], and let him be my priest, so he (will) live.” My father took me up (while still) a boy, and handed me (over) to the service of the goddess, and as a priest I brought offerings to the goddess. At the hand of Ištar, My Lady, I experienced prosperity, and *Ištar, My Lady, took me by the hand* and provided for me (§§2–3).⁸⁸

Further, Hattušili relates: “*Ištar, My Lady, gave me kingship over Hatti Land*. I became the Great King; she took me as a prince and let me (rise) to kingship” (§12a-b). Furthermore, Hattušili’s patronage by Ištar is attested also by an Akkadian bulla that describes him as “Belove[d . . . of Ištar]r of Šamuha” (*na-ra-a*[m . . . ^d*Ištar*]r ^{URU}*ša-mu-ha*).⁸⁹

Hattušili’s apology exemplifies, once again, the well-known literary motif of the youngest son who finally rises to power under special divine care. We find similar motifs in the biblical literature, for example regarding Isaac / Ishmael; Jacob / Esau; David from among his brothers; as well as Solomon / Adonijah.⁹⁰ As in the case of Sargon of Akkad (and indirectly Sargon II), the goddess Ištar plays an essential role in the usurper’s process of legitimating Hattušili. Due to Ištar’s benevolence,

⁸⁷ See E. Laroche, *Catalogue des Textes Hittites* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1971), no. 81; T. P. J. van den Hout, “Apology of Hattušili III,” in W. W. Hallo and K. L. Younger, Jr. (eds.), *The Context of Scripture* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), vol. 1, pp. 199–204; Singer, *The Hittites and Their Civilization*, pp. 86–93; Knapp, *Royal Apologetic in the Ancient Near East*, pp. 119–159 (see also his discussion of the earlier Hittite King Telipinu, *ibid.*, pp. 73–117). The English citations of the Apology in this study are from van den Hout.

⁸⁸ “The king being taken by the hand of his personal deity is illustrated on many reliefs and seal impressions. Such representations are known for Muwatalli II, Muršili III/Urhitešub and Tuthaliya IV; for Hattušili III we only have the description of such a scene on the seal on the silver tablet containing the peace treaty with Ramesses II”; see van den Hout, “Apology of Hattušili III,” p. 199, note 5.

⁸⁹ See H. G. Güterbock, *Siegel aus Boğazköy: Erster Teil, Königssiegel der Grabungen bis 1938*, Archiv für Orientforschung, Beiheft 5 (Osnabrück, Biblio-Verlag, 1967), p. 28, no. 45. Šamuha was the location of the temple where Hattušili served as priest of Ištar.

⁹⁰ See Gen 21:9–13; 25:23; 27:29, 37, 40; 1 Sam 16:10–13; 1 Kgs 1:5–40; 1 Chr 3:5.

as claimed by Hattušili, he became the Great King of Hatti Land, despite being the youngest child of his father. It happened again at the time when the legitimate king, his nephew Urhi-Tešub, the son of King Muwatalli (Hattušili's elder brother, who died), was alive and still held power (§10b-c). Both of these elements appear in the biblical story of Solomon, who rose to power despite being one of the younger sons of David and while his elder brother, Adonijah, was alive: because "the Lord loved him," much as Ištar loved Hattušili.⁹¹

The tales about Sargon the Great of Akkad and his grandson Narām-Sîn (whose name means "beloved of Sin") were well known in the Hatti Land.⁹² As van de Mieroop writes, "Throughout their history, from the eighteenth to the thirteenth centuries, the Hittite of Central Anatolia preserved the memory of these kings. The contexts in which they appear are varied, from historical texts to rituals, and characteristics associated with them are wide-ranging as well."⁹³ King Hattušili I, for instance, compares his military aggressions against the city of Hahhum, with those of Sargon of Akkad.⁹⁴ The notion of the special attention of the goddess Ištar to Hattušili III, therefore, could be simulated from what was known to him – or to the Hittite scribes – about Ištar's patronage of Sargon of Akkad. This view may explain why Hattušili III chose the Akkadian goddess Ištar as his patron over any other Hittite or Mesopotamian

⁹¹ More on Hattušili III, see Singer, *The Hittites and Their Civilization*, pp. 81–93 and the bibliography on pp. 92–93.

⁹² See, for example, already W. F. Albright, "The Epic of the King of Battle: Sargon of Akkad in Cappadocia," *JSOR* 7 (1923) pp. 1–20; H. G. Güterbock, "Sargon of Akkad Mentioned by Hattušili I of Hatti," *JCS* 18 (1964), pp. 1–6, esp. pp. 5–6; H. A. Hoffner, "Remarks on the Hittite Version of the Naram-Sin Legend," *JCS* 23 (1970), pp. 17–22; van de Mieroop, "Sargon of Akkad and His Successors in Anatolia," pp. 133–159. In this context it is also worth mentioning the important study by G. Beckman, "Mesopotamians and Mesopotamian Learning at Hattuša," *JCS* 35 (1983), pp. 97–114, regarding the Hittites' borrowing of Mesopotamian cultural, literary, and writing heritage. On the latter topic, see most recently, Y. Cohen, "Review of An De Vos: *Die Lebermodelle aus Boğazköy*, *Studien zu den Boğazköy-Texten* Beihefte 5 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2013), *ZA* 105 (2015): 121–26 (with additional bibliography).

⁹³ Van de Mieroop, "Sargon of Akkad and His Successors in Anatolia," p. 134.

⁹⁴ See, for example, Güterbock, "Sargon of Akkad Mentioned by Hattušili I of Hatti," pp. 1–6; van de Mieroop, "Sargon of Akkad and His Successors in Anatolia," pp. 134–136. Some scholars have stated that the Sargon referred to by Hattušili I was not Sargon of Akkad, but rather Sargon I of Assyria in the nineteenth century. However, as van de Mieroop stresses, "this seems highly unlikely, as there is barely evidence of Old Assyrian military campaigning, except for Šamši-adad I, and as later Hittite traditions clearly show that Sargon of Agade was well-known there" (*ibid.*, p. 136 and further references there).

deity.⁹⁵ Indeed, Harry Hoffner cautiously stresses that “it is not impossible to speak of a tradition of royal apologies in the Hittite kingdom, or even of certain loose literary form.”⁹⁶ Whether or not there is a direct connection between the appeals to Ištar’s legitimation of Sargon the Great and Ḫattušili III, this is in any case another clear example of divine election as a royal apology made by a king who was not directly in line for the throne, as we have seen regarding King Solomon.

C. Egypt: *Queen Hatshepsut and Other Pharaohs*

An Egyptian text recounts that the god Amon-Re (who was considered to be the true father of the pharaoh) chose a king from among his brothers:

Then they laid down the royal brothers before the god, but he did not select any of them. They laid down again the royal brother, son of Amon, born of Mut, lord of heaven, son of Re, Aselta, living eternally. Then this god Amon-Re, lord of the throne of the Two Lands [Upper and Lower Egypt], said: “It is he who is your king. It is he who will cause you to live . . . It is he who is your lord.”⁹⁷

This process recalls the biblical stories regarding kings who were chosen from among their brothers, such as David (1 Sam 16:1–13), and Solomon as presented by the Chronicler (1 Chr 28:5). It is not clear from this Egyptian text if the one who was chosen was or was not in the direct royal line to the throne. Nevertheless, there were certainly cases of unconventional succession in Egyptian history, including the first three

⁹⁵ On the Hittite pantheon, see for example, E. Laroche, “The Pantheon of Asia Minor: The Organization of the Hittite Gods,” in Y. Bonnefoy (ed.), *Mythologies I* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 218–222; I. Singer, “‘The Thousand Gods of Hatti’: The Limits of an Expanding Pantheon,” *IOS* 14 (1994), pp. 81–102; D. Schwemer, “Das hethitische Reichspantheon: Überlegungen zu Struktur und Genese,” in R. G. Kratz und H. Spieckermann (eds.), *Götterbilder – Gottesbilder – Weltbilder, Polytheismus und Monotheismus in der Welt der Antike*, *Forschungen zum Alten Testament* 2/17 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), pp. 241–265; B. J. Collins, *The Hittites and Their World*, *Archaeology and Biblical Studies* 7 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), pp. 157–195.

⁹⁶ See H. A. Hoffner, “Propaganda and Political Justification in Hittite Historiography,” in H. Goedicke and J. J. M. Roberts (eds.), *Unity and Diversity: Essays in the History, Literature, and Religion of the Ancient Near East* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1975), pp. 49–62, esp. p. 50. Hoffner distinguishes apologies in the sense of “defenses of usurpations” from “other defenses made by Hittite kings,” and brings some examples for the latter. Knapp, *Royal Apologetic in the Ancient Near East*, pp. 119–120, rejects Hoffner’s approach at this point, but he does not consider the parallels with the Sargon legends.

⁹⁷ See H. Schäfer (ed.), *Urkunden der ältesten Äthiopienkönige* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichesche Buchhandlung, 1905), pp. 94–95.

kings of the Fifth Dynasty, as well as some rulers of the New Kingdom (Eighteenth–Twentieth Dynasties): Queen Hatshepsut (1479–1458 BCE) and Amenhotep III (1391–1353 or 1388–1351 BCE) of the Eighteenth Dynasty, Ramesses II (1279–1213 BCE) of the Nineteenth Dynasty, and much later Alexander the Great of Macedonia (336–323 BCE) – none of these were considered at their birth to be heirs to the throne. Their legitimacy for the Egyptian throne was, therefore, doubtful from the very beginning.⁹⁸

For example, Hatshepsut ruled Egypt *de facto*, as a female Pharaoh, for approximately twenty-two years, despite the fact that Thutmose (/ Thutmosis) III stood in line for the Egyptian throne (Eighteenth Dynasty; 1479–1425 BCE; this includes those ca. twenty-two years he was co-regent with Queen Hatshepsut). She was the actual ruling power, and Thutmose III was only a “figurehead,”⁹⁹ that is, no more than a nominal co-regent. To cite the mayor of Thebes, Ineny, “she conducted the affairs of the country, the Two Lands being in her control.”¹⁰⁰ As presented in her inscriptions, Hatshepsut repeatedly attempted to legitimize her reign in various ways. She claimed that her earthly father, Thutmose I, chose her as his heir because she was a daughter of his chief wife, Ahmes, and as such she had an advantage over his grandson, Thutmose III, who was born to a lesser wife of his son, Thutmose II. However, as Kurt Sethe demonstrated, Hatshepsut’s claim to have been crowned by her father is

⁹⁸ See K. Sethe, “Altes und Neues zur Geschichte der Thronstreitigkeiten unter den Nachfolgern Thutmosis I.,” *ZÄS* 36 (1898), pp. 24–81, esp. pp. 63–68 (“VII. Makere’s Berufung zur Königswürde”); idem, *Das Hatshepsut-Problem: Noch Einmal Untersucht* (Berlin: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaft, 1932); W. F. Edgerton, *The Thutmosid Succession*, Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 8 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933), p. 31; S. Schott, “Zum Krönungstag der Königin Hatshepsut,” in *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen: Philologisch-Historische Klasse* Nr. 6 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1955), pp. 195–219; W. C. Hayes, “Egypt: Internal Affairs from Thutmose I to the Death of Amenophis III,” in L. E. S. Edwards (ed.), *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), vol. 2, part 1, pp. 313–416, esp. pp. 317–319; H. Brunner, *Die Geburt des Gottkönigs: Studien Zur Überlieferung eines altägyptischen Mythos*, 2nd ed., Ägyptologische Abhandlungen 10 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1986), p. 195, note 1; E. Hornung, “The Pharaoh,” in S. Donadoni (ed.), *The Egyptians* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), pp. 283–314, esp. pp. 296–297.

⁹⁹ See J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1906; repr. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), vol. 2: *The Eighteenth Dynasty*, §340 (p. 142), and see also §341 (pp. 142–143).

¹⁰⁰ See Hayes, “Egypt: Internal Affairs from Thutmose I to the Death of Amenophis III,” p. 317 and the reference there.

historically untrue. Thutmose I had a number of sons and one of them followed him to the throne – Thutmose II – rather than his daughter, Hatshepsut.¹⁰¹

Another attempt by Hatshepsut to legitimize her reign is of special interest for the current study: her claim to be the daughter of the god Amon (/ Amun / Amen),¹⁰² and *the one whom Amon loves*. That is, she was born to an earthly queen but engendered by a heavenly father.¹⁰³ An inscription recounts how the god Khnum repeats the instructions that he has obtained from Amon regarding Hatshepsut (while now putting them in the first person), as follows:

I have given you [i.e., Hatshepsut] to be *the first* of all living creatures, while you shine as king of Upper and Lower Egypt, of South and North, according as your father [i.e., the god Amon], *who loves you*, has commanded.¹⁰⁴

Another inscription describes:

Amon's Makere [i.e., Hatshepsut], *whom he* [i.e., Amon] *loves*, who is upon his throne, for whom he has made to flourish the inheritance of Two Lands, the Kingdom of the South and North.¹⁰⁵

This inscription states further: "Utterance of Amon-Re, lord of Thebes: 'Welcome! My sweet daughter, *my favorite*, the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Makere (Hatshepsut), who makes my beautiful monuments, who purifies the seat of the great ennead of gods for my dwelling, as memorial of her love.'¹⁰⁶ In Hatshepsut's Obelisk in the temple of Amon at Karnak, in the south side of the Shaft Inscription, there is written:

¹⁰¹ See Sethe, "Altes und Neues zur Geschichte der Thronstreitigkeiten unter den Nachfolgern Thutmosis' I.," pp. 63–68; idem, *Das Hatshepsut-Problem: Noch Einmal Untersucht*, pp. 18–28.

¹⁰² Compare the biblical parallel in Ps 2:7 regarding the king: יהוה אמר אלי בני אתה / אני היום ילדך ("The Lord has said to me, You are my son; this day have I begotten you").

¹⁰³ "This myth is documented in a detailed sequence of seventeen pictures in her temple at Deir al-Bahri, which describes Amun's encounter with the queen, the god Khnum forming the child, the birth, *her naming*, the child in the care of divine nurses, and, finally, her solemn recognition by Amun. A second complete cycle is preserved in the temple of Luxor by Amenophis III." See Hornung, "The Pharaoh," pp. 296–297 (*italics mine*).

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. 2, p. 82 (§203).

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. 2, p. 116 (§285).

¹⁰⁶ Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. 2, pp. 116–117 (§286). Note that Hatshepsut also attempted to legitimize her reign "through an oracle ceremony during which the god Amun proclaimed his decision that Hatshepsut was to become king. Scenes show him crowning Hatshepsut, who is kneeling before him, and thereby bestowing the kingship on her"; see Hornung, "The Pharaoh," p. 297. Such claims of oracular legitimation are

"*Hatshepsut Khenemet-Amun* ["united with Amon"], *beloved of Amen-Re*, king of gods, given life like Re forever."¹⁰⁷ This theme is also reiterated in the Base Inscription of the Obelisk: "*Hatshepsut Khenemet-Amun*, who lives forever. The daughter of Amen-Re, *his beloved*, his only one who came from him . . . whom Amun himself made appear upon the throne of Southern On; whom he chose as guardian of Egypt."¹⁰⁸ Then appears what is called the "Speech of the Queen," where Hatshepsut declares: "I swear, as *I am loved of Re*; As *Amun*, my father, favors me; as my nostrils are refreshed with life and dominion; as I wear the white crown; as I appear with the red crown."¹⁰⁹

Indeed, James H. Breasted concluded that:

Beginning with the Fourth Dynasty, every Egyptian king might bear the title, "Son of Re," the sun-god. It is not an accident therefore, that the interesting folk-tale preserved to us in the Papyrus Westcar¹¹⁰ narrates that the three children of a priest's wife, begotten by Re, and born among astonishing prodigies, became the first three kings of the Fifth Dynasty . . . but in its strictest sense the title indicated that the king was immediately and physically the offspring of the god and a mortal mother. It is probable that *this interpretation was pressed at first only by kings whose claims to the throne through their mortal parents were questionable* . . . Later every king claimed Amon (successor of Re) as his physical father [*italics added*].¹¹¹

Breasted also points out the most famous example in later times: "Alexander the Great, who journeyed to the Oasis of Amon that he might be recognized as the god's son, was therefore merely acting in harmony with a state fiction as old as the Fifth Dynasty. He thus became the legitimate king of Egypt by the only possible means."¹¹²

also made in the case of David (1 Sam 16:1–13) and, according to the Chronicler, Solomon as well (1 Chr 22:9; 28:5); on the latter, see [Chapter Seven, IV, 1](#).

¹⁰⁷ See M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), vol. 2, pp. 25–29, esp. pp. 25–26. For various inscriptions of Hatshepsut, see now also M. Dessoudeix, *Lettres égyptiennes II: L'apogée du Nouvel Empire – Hatshepsout, Thoutmosis III, Amenhotep II et Thoutmosis IV* (Paris: Actes Sud, 2012), pp. 129–156.

¹⁰⁸ See Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. 2, p. 26.

¹⁰⁹ See Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. 2, pp. 27–28, esp. p. 28.

¹¹⁰ Papyrus Westcar is from 700 to 1000 years later than the birth of the three kings that it narrates; see Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. 2, p. 76, note b (§187).

¹¹¹ Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. 2, pp. 75–76 (§187), 77 (§189).

¹¹² See Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. 2, 77 (§189). On a different claim that Alexander was addressed as "son of god" by the prophet of Amon, see Plutarch, *Alexander* 27.

D. Persia: Xerxes I

Xerxes I (486/5–465 BCE) of Persia was not the eldest son of Darius I. He was the firstborn of the four sons of Darius' wife Atossa, daughter of Cyrus the Great, but Darius already had other sons from a previous wife. Despite this, Darius rejected his older son Artabazenes, from his previous wife, as successor to the throne, and chose Xerxes, because of the great influence that Atossa had on him and because of her special position in the Achaemenid royal court.¹¹³ Indeed, as Herodotus recounts:

For Darius had three sons born to him before he became king by his first wife ... and four besides after he became king by Atossa daughter of Cyrus; of the earlier sons Artobazanes was the eldest, and Xerxes of the later ... Artobazanes pleading that he was the eldest of all Darius' offspring and that it was everywhere customary that the eldest should rule; Xerxes that he was son of Cyrus' daughter Atossa and that it was Cyrus who had won the Persians their freedom (*Historia* 7.2–3).

On the advice of Demaratus of Sparta, Xerxes added another plea saying that “he had been born when Darius was already king and ruler of Persia, but Artobazanes when Darius was yet a subject ... Darius judged his plea to be just and declared him king.” “But to my thinking,” says Herodotus, “Xerxes would have been made king even without this advice; for Atossa was all-powerful.”¹¹⁴ Consequently, in his inscription Xerxes attempts to legitimate his access to the throne, saying that it was the will of Ahuramazdā: “So says Xerxes, the king: Darius also had other sons; (but) it was Ahuramazdā's desire ... When my father Darius had taken his place (in the hereafter) according to the will of Ahuramazdā, I became king instead of my father.”¹¹⁵ In this case also, neither God's love nor a new name are explicitly mentioned, but like other usurpers in the ancient Near East, Xerxes claims divine preference by his patron deity. Further, as Hattušili claimed to be the fourth child of his father (though the third son), so Xerxes is described as the fourth son of his father. Similarly, according to the Succession Narrative, Solomon became king after

¹¹³ Cf. R. Schmitt, “Atossa,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (New York: Encyclopaedia Iranica Foundation, 1989), vol. 3, pp. 13–14 (online: www.iranicaonline.org/articles/atossa-achaemenid-queen updated August 17, 2011; accessed February 12, 2016).

¹¹⁴ Herodotus, *Historia* 7.2–3; see A. D. Godley, *Herodotus with an English Translation*, Loeb Classical Library (London: W. Heinemann / New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1922), vol. 3, pp. 300–303.

¹¹⁵ See Schmitt, *Die altpersischen Inschriften der Achaimeniden*, p. 162 (XPf, §4, lines A-K). The English translation is mine.

David's older sons Amnon (2 Sam 13), Absalom (2 Sam 14–18) and Adonijah (1 Kgs 1–2) were rejected.¹¹⁶ However, Herodotus' reference to three older brothers of Xerxes is probably just a coincidence, rather than a result of relying on a standard trope.

V. THE CONCEPT OF DIVINE LOVE IN 2 SAMUEL 12 AND ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN LITERATURE

The land and people of ancient Israel had various cultural, economic, and political interactions with Mesopotamia, the Hatti Land, and Egypt. Thus, the notion of the special divine love bestowed on Solomon (2 Sam 12:24d–25) could potentially have developed independently, or been influenced – in one way or another – by any or all of the cultural entities discussed earlier. The cultural interactions between Israel and Mesopotamia, on the one hand, and Egypt, on the other, are particularly noteworthy. Egypt and Egyptians are mentioned in the Hebrew Bible more than any other land and nation; and there is ample evidence for the literary and cultural connections between Egypt and Israel.¹¹⁷ Particularly in the case of Solomon, the biblical texts affirm that he married an Egyptian princess (1 Kgs 3:1; 9:16) and conducted trade with them (1 Kgs 10:28–29). The stories (or legends) of Sargon (and his grandson, Narām-Sîn) were also known outside Mesopotamia's boundaries, such as in the Hatti Land.¹¹⁸ They were mentioned also in the Hurrian ritual texts,¹¹⁹ and a copy of Sargon's epic was discovered in the Tel El-Amarna archive in Egypt.¹²⁰ Moreover, cultural contacts between the Mesopotamian world and the Land and people of Israel are an established fact. There are many more than sufficient texts in almost every biblical literary genre that reflect this.¹²¹ Archaeological finds, such as a fragment of

¹¹⁶ On the numerical pattern of “three-four” and its application to Solomon, see [Chapter Seven §II](#), and [Chapter Ten, §III](#).

¹¹⁷ See in detail I. Kalimi, “Review of Rivka Ulmer, *Egyptian Cultural Icons in Midrash*,” *JNES* 71 (2012), pp. 351–354.

¹¹⁸ See [§IV, 2, B](#) and the references listed in [notes 92–93](#).

¹¹⁹ See van de Mieroop, “Sargon of Akkad and His Successors in Anatolia,” pp. 140–141.

¹²⁰ See Albright, “The Epic of the King of Battle: Sargon of Akkad in Cappadocia,” pp. 1–20; Westenholz, *Legends of the Kings of Akkade: The Texts*, pp. 102–139.

¹²¹ See, for example, W. W. Hallo, B. W. Jones, and G. L. Mattingly (eds.), *The Bible in the Light of Cuneiform Literature*, Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Studies 8 (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1990).

the Gilgamesh epic found at Megiddo¹²² and the stele-fragment of Sargon II from Ashdod,¹²³ also reflect these contacts. However, while the possibility of the transmission of traditions of various sorts to Biblical Israel is clear, one runs into trouble when it comes to matching such activity to specific moments in Israel's history. For instance, Sargon II's stele is obviously well after the time of Solomon, and the Gilgamesh fragment dates to the fourteenth century BCE, which would make it pre-Israelite. Neither offers direct evidence of Sargon traditions known in Israel during the early Israelite monarchy. Moreover, as far as we know, the Mesopotamian empires were not active in the Levant during Solomon's period. The Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian control of the Land of Israel in general, and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah in particular, during the ninth to the sixth centuries BCE, definitely have had a great impact on Israelite literature and thought as reflected in many Akkadian and biblical sources of the First Temple period.¹²⁴ To mention just two specific traditions relevant to our discussion: (a) The Table of Nations recounts the building of the city of Akkad by Nimrod (Gen 10:8–10), who might be identified with Sargon of Akkad (or with his grandson, Narām-Sîn), or with the later Assyrian king Tukulti-Ninurta I (1243–1207 BCE).¹²⁵ (b) Though the

¹²² A. Goetze and S. Levy, "Fragment of Gilgamesh Epic from Megiddo," *Atiqot* 2 (1959), pp. 121–128.

¹²³ See H. Tadmor, "Fragments of an Assyrian Stela of Sargon II," in M. Cogan (ed.), *With My Many Chariots I Have Gone up the Heights of Mountains: Historical and Literary Studies on Ancient Mesopotamia and Israel* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2011), pp. 495–504.

¹²⁴ One example, from among many, involves the curses listed in Deuteronomy 28 with those listed in the "Esarhaddon Succession Treaty," which King Esarhaddon of Assyria convened with his vassals regarding the succession of his son Aššurbanipal; see S. Parpola and K. Watanabe (eds.), *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths*, *State Archives of Assyria* 2 (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1988).

¹²⁵ For the identification of Nimrod and Akkad in Gen 10:8–10 with Sargon himself (or his grandson Narām-Sîn) and Agade, see for instance, Y. Levin, "Nimrod the Mighty, King of Kish, King of Sumer and Akkad," *VT* 52 (2002), pp. 350–366. See also Mic 5:5, which mentions אֶרֶץ נִמְרוֹד in parallel to אֶרֶץ אֲשׁוּר. However, though Nimrod is not presented here as a god, but rather as a mighty human hunter, there are scholars who identify him with the Akkadian god of war, Ninurta, and underline the great power of Nimrod as Mesopotamian king; see van der Kooij, "Nimrod, A Mighty Hunter before the Lord!," pp. 2–8. However, other scholars think that the biblical Nimrod is more likely a memory of Tukulti-Ninurta, see E. A. Speiser, "In Search of Nimrod," *Eretz-Israel* 5, Benjamin Mazar vol. (1958), pp. 32*–36*; K. van der Toorn and P. W. van der Horst, "Nimrod Before and After the Bible," *HTR* 83 (1990), pp. 1–29, esp. p. 7.

name “Moses” is probably an abbreviation of an Egyptian theophoric name (*mes* means “child”),¹²⁶ the story about his rescue from a basket floating down the Nile (Exod 2:1–10), is a close parallel to the rescue of Sargon of Akkad from a basket floating down the Euphrates as is told in the Sargon Birth Legend, as it has survived from the time of Sargon II (the last quarter of the eighth century BCE; see §IV, 2, A).¹²⁷

Now, the biblical name Yedidyah is politically – or typologically (however, not lexically) – equivalent to the name Šarru-kīn, and the biblical phrase “the Lord loved him” is parallel to “Ištar loved me.” Though these cases are from different places and times, their intention is one and the same, namely to bestow a religious legitimization on the usurper, whether Sargon of Akkad or Sargon II of Ashur, or Solomon. Possibly the tales of Sargon (and Narām-Sīn) were known in ancient Israel much as they were in the Ḫatti Land. Thus one cannot exclude the possibility that the author of 2 Samuel 12:24d–25 knew the Sargon Birth Legend and thought of “Ištar loved me” as a model for his note about Solomon, that “the Lord loved him,” while ascribing to the latter the name Yedidyah as a politically equivalent name to Šarru-kīn.

However, it should be acknowledged that, while Šarru-kīn is the only name attested in the case(s) of Sargon, in the ancient Israelite historiography the name Yedidyah was not generally employed. Both histories, the early (Deuteronomistic) as well as the late (Chronistic) systematically used the birth-name Solomon, rather than the name Yedidyah.¹²⁸ That leaves it uncertain when or how often this name was actually

¹²⁶ See J. G. Griffiths, “The Egyptian Derivation of the Name Moses,” *JNES* 12 (1953), pp. 225–231, esp. p. 231 and references there to earlier literature; C. Houtman, *Exodus*, trans. J. Rebel and S. Woudstra, Historical Commentary on the Old Testament (Kampen: Kok, 1993), vol. 1, pp. 83–86, esp. pp. 83–84 (and the survey of the history of interpretation there, including Philo and Josephus, who explained the Greek version of the name on the basis of contemporary Egyptian language). In the biblical story the name is explained according to a midrashic folk-etymology that plays on the sounds of the words משה and משיטה: “she called his name Moses (משה): and she said, because I drew him (משיטה) out of the water” (Exod 2:10); these words are attributed to the Pharaoh’s daughter as if she knew the Hebrew language.

¹²⁷ Although one cannot exclude the hypothetical possibility that both stories had a common folkloristic theme (or *Märchenmotif*); see H. Greßmann, *Moses und seine Zeit: Ein Kommentar zu den Mose-Sagen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1913), pp. 1–16.

¹²⁸ However, the name Yedidyah is alluded to in the book of Nehemiah. On this and the lack of any mention of “Yedidyah” in Chronicles, see Chapter Seven, §IV, 2. For further similarities between the legend on Sargon and the Solomon narrative, see §IV, 2, A (a).

employed to describe Solomon. Still, the political and religious connotations of the name should be clear: It legitimates the future king Solomon in the same way that similar names and claims to divine love legitimate other usurpers in the ancient Near East. Nevertheless, there remains something unique in this account: While across the ancient Near East we find other appeals to divine love of the usurper, sometimes associated with kings who have taken a new regal name, none of the extant parallels combine these motifs. Only in 2 Samuel 12:24d–25 is the new name itself given by the deity, and directly described as an expression of divine love: Solomon is both loved (or preferred) by the Lord and at the same time given a new name that refers to that love, also *by the Lord*.

VI. CONCLUSION

The birth story of Solomon (2 Sam 12:24–25) is a unique example of its kind in the ancient Israelite historiography of the monarchic period. Though the birth name of the newborn child was Solomon, he received an additional name by the divine messenger, Nathan: Yedidyah” stating that “the Lord loved him.” The purpose and meaning of this name and the phrase should be understood against three complementary backgrounds: its immediate context (2 Sam 10–12), its wider context in the story regarding Solomon’s rise to power (1 Kgs 1–2), and its parallels in comparable ancient Near Eastern texts that recount the claims to the throne by usurpers and kings outside the royal line. The latter attempted to legitimize their kingship by introducing themselves as beloved of or chosen by patron divinities, occasionally taking a new throne name to reflect their status vis-à-vis the god or gods. This historical and literary phenomenon is clearly reflected in Mesopotamian, Anatolian, Egyptian, and Persian writings of different periods. It appears in Sumerian, Old Babylonian, and Neo-Assyrian sources (regarding Sargon the Great of Akkad and Sargon II of Assyria); in Hittite texts (regarding Hattušili III); in Egyptian writings (regarding Hatshepsut and other Pharaohs); and to some extent regarding Xerxes I of Persia (though he claims neither a new name nor divine *love*).

This comparative historical discussion reveals that in ancient Israel and its surrounding cultures, both Semitic and non-Semitic, one method of self-legitimation by usurpers was to claim that they had divine legitimization. In contrast to Knapp’s claim that the similarities between these apologies in ancient Near Eastern cultures reflect similar situations rather

than a common literary heritage,¹²⁹ it seems more likely that there was a tradition of such royal apologies with common core features, which were shared among the ancient Near Eastern cultures. This is seen especially in the cases of Sargon the Great and Hattušili III, who both emphasize patronage by Ištar, despite Ištar not being a native Hittite deity. That traditions regarding Sargon the Great were widely known in the Hatti Land supports the conclusion that the connection is deliberate, and provides a rough parallel to the similar motif in 2 Samuel 12:24d–25. This stands against Knapp's conclusion that Solomon's Succession Narrative is unusual in the ancient Near East, because it justifies Solomon's actions, but does not legitimate Solomon's right to the throne itself.¹³⁰

Against the background of these ancient Near Eastern parallels, the birth story and additional name of Solomon – Yediyah – and the note of divine love in 2 Samuel 12:24d–25 are seen to be closely related to Solomon's accession in 1 Kings 1–2. In fact, the former story in Samuel serves as a background, legitimization and justification for the latter, and most likely stems from the same hand. Moreover, the birth story of Solomon in 2 Samuel 10–12 and his coronation in 1 Kings 1–2 frame the entire succession narrative. Note also that Nathan, who supported Solomon in his competition with Adonijah (1 Kgs 1), is the one who gave the name Yediyah to Bathsheba's second-born child and communicated the divine love and protection to him (2 Sam 12:24d–25).

Theoretically the notion of divine love and this way of justifying a usurper in Israel could have been developed either independently or – more likely – influenced by any of the above-mentioned surrounding cultures. If the latter, presumably it found its way from Mesopotamia to Israel. Also, the usurpation of Solomon, which is justified as the preference of the Lord (*"for it was his from the Lord,"* 1 Kgs 2:15), is broadly parallel to that of Sargon the Great's usurpation, which is explained as the preference of the gods, particularly Inanna/Ištar. Moreover, the name

¹²⁹ See Knapp, *Royal Apologetic in the Ancient Near East*, pp. 45–46: "I contend that the recurrence of these motifs is not a product of later authors consciously drawing on the work of the earlier apologies; it seems unlikely that the content of most apologies diffused outside of the societies in which they originate . . . These motifs, then, are not exclusive to any one society of the ancient Near East; they sprung up from the cultural and ideological similarities shared by these societies."

¹³⁰ See Knapp, *Royal Apologetic in the Ancient Near East*, pp. 264–267, cf. pp. 28–30. He excludes both 2 Sam 11–12 and 1 Kgs 2:15, 22–24 (which also refer to Solomon's divine election) from the Succession Narrative.

Yedidyah is politically and ideologically comparable to the name Šarrukīn (Sargon), and the phrase “the Lord loved him” is parallel to the phrase “Ištar loved me” in the Sargon Birth Legend. In both cases the intention is to bestow a divine legitimization on the usurper. That is not necessarily to say that the Succession Narrative is drawing on these specific texts, but rather that it reflects the same or similar traditions. In principle, these could have also found their way to Israel from Egypt, or through the Hittite apology of Hattušili III, which was itself influenced by the Mesopotamian ones (but the Hittite apology does not refer explicitly to divine love or a new name).

In any case, rather than being a strange fragment unrelated to its context, the legitimization of Solomon in the biblical texts is fully in line with broader ancient Near Eastern traditions. The naming of Solomon Yedidyah, and the affirmation that “the Lord loved him” are part and parcel of Solomon’s succession narrative, which provides divine legitimization for his usurpation described in 1 Kings 1–2, where this notion is reinforced (1 Kgs 2:15, 24).

CHAPTER 7

Solomon's Birth and Names in Second Temple Period Literature

I. INTRODUCTION

As is well known, David and Solomon both have essential places in the Former Prophets, namely in the books of Samuel and Kings. Yet while David is mentioned in several writings included in the Latter Prophets,¹ Solomon is never mentioned there. Instead, he is mentioned in a number of books that are included in the Writings. This comprises, first and foremost, the late historical books – Chronicles (several times in 1 Chr and particularly 2 Chr 1–9 // 1 Kgs 1–11) and Nehemiah (13:26) – and in the poetic and wisdom literature, specifically: Psalms (72:1; 127:1), the Song of Songs (1:1, 5; 3:7–11; 8:11–12) and Proverbs (1:1; 25:1). Qohelet (or Ecclesiastes) was also traditionally attributed to him, as was the apocryphal (or deuterocanonical) book, the *Wisdom of Solomon*, and the pseudepigraphical book, the *Testament of Solomon*.

The purpose of this chapter is not to discuss the role of Solomon in the entire Writings and Second Temple-period Jewish literature, but rather in particular characteristic cases. This includes Solomon's introduction in the book of Chronicles (his birth, name, and place among Bathsheba's sons), where current scholarly opinions will be critically reviewed. The chapter also examines the name "Yedidyah (/ Jedidiah)," which is not mentioned in Chronicles, the *Wisdom of Solomon*, the *Testament of Solomon*, or in Josephus' writings, but is alluded to in

¹ See, for example, Isa 9:6; 16:5; 29:1; Jer 17:25; 22:2, 30; 36:30; Ezek 34:24; 37:24; Hos 3:5; Amos 9:11; Zech 12:7, 8; 13:1.

Psalms and Nehemiah. The ultimate goal, therefore, is to point out two trends in the reception of Solomon's birth and naming in the literature subsequent to Samuel-Kings. Further, the chapter explores the wordplays on the names Shlomoh and Yedidyah in the book of *Ben Sira*, and discusses the question of whether "Qohelet" (Qoh 1:1) was indeed a third name for Solomon.

II. SOLOMON'S BIRTH AND HIS PLACE AMONG BATHSHEBA'S SONS IN CHRONICLES

In the Chronistic history, the Chronicler recounts the story about the Israelites' wars with the Transjordanian kingdoms – the Ammonites and Arameans – essentially as it appears in his source, the book of Samuel (1 Chr 19:1–20:3 // 2 Sam 10:1–19 + 11:1a–b + 12:26–31).² However, he omits from his composition the story about David's affair with Uriah's wife, Uriah's murder, and David's marriage with Bathsheba, which led to the birth of Solomon (2 Sam 11:1c–12:25). All the masterful literarily structured narrative in Samuel³ was completely withheld from the potential readers of Chronicles. Furthermore, the Chronicler omits not only the detailed story of 2 Samuel 11:1c–12:25, but also any reference to it. When he presents Solomon and his mother, for the first time in his book, he writes: "Bathshua the daughter of Ammiel" (1 Chr 3:5), instead of "Bathsheba the daughter of Eliam, *the wife of Uriah the Hittite*," as is presented in his *Vorlage* (2 Sam 11:3, 26).⁴ The intention of the Chronicler is obvious:

² In contrast to some scholars (for instance, A. G. Auld), my opinion is that Samuel-Kings was the primary source used by the Chronicler. On this issue, see in detail Kalimi, "Kings with Privilege: The Core Source(s) of the Parallel Texts between the Deuteronomistic and Chronistic Histories"; and [Chapter Three](#), §III.

³ See [Chapter Five](#).

⁴ The LXX and Vulgate versions of 1 Chr 3:5 imply a *Vorlage* that read בַּת-שֶׁבַע instead of בַּת-שִׁעָ. Targum Chronicles explicitly identifies: "Bathshua, who was Bathsheba." "The variation בַּת-שֶׁבַע / בַּת-שִׁעָ is due to homophony of שֶׁבַע and שִׁעָ; cf. E. L. Curtis and A. A. Madsen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Chronicles*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1910), p. 99. For the form *Bathshua*, cf. 1 Chr 2:3; Gen 38:2, 12 (Judah's wife). The name *Ammiel* in Chronicles instead of *Eliam* in Samuel is a result of inverting the order of the theophoric element, compare יואל/אליהו and יהויכין/יכניה. Indeed, in his commentary on 1 Chr 3:5, David Kimchi states that the names Bathshua/Bathsheba as well as Ammiel/Eliam are variations of the same names. LXX 2 Sam 11:3 has: "the daughter of *Eliab*" (interchange of שֶׁבַע and שִׁעָ), and the Peshiṭta: "the daughter of *Ahinoam*" (cf. 1 Chr 3:1). For a detailed discussion of the identity of Bathsheba, see A. E. Gardner, "The Identity of Bathsheba," *RB* 112 (2005), pp. 521–535.

to “purify” both David and Solomon’s mother from any stain of their adulterous affair and avoid even a hint of it. Moreover, the Chronicler avoids mentioning the theophoric name Yedidyah (i.e., “beloved of the Lord”) in his writing. This could be due to the fact that in 2 Samuel 12:24–25, Yedidyah is related to the story of the adultery (that is, while the first son died, the second son, Solomon, was loved by the Lord), and therefore the Chronicler omits the name along with the rest of the story.⁵ Indeed, any hint to that issue would damage the idealized portrayals of the founders of the Davidic Dynasty – David and Solomon – that he presents in his writing.⁶ This intention of the Chronicler is appropriately and persistently noted in premodern and modern biblical scholarship. For instance, already in the twelfth century CE, the author of the commentary ascribed to Rashi (Pseudo-Rashi) states in his comment on several verses in the book that “In this book, he [i.e., the Chronicler] does not want to say anything that may hurt the Davidic House [i.e., Dynasty].”⁷

Indeed, if the Chronicler wanted to exclude from his book the story of 2 Samuel 12, it would have been complicated for him to include the story regarding the birth and death of David’s and Bathsheba’s first son (2 Sam 11:27; 12:14–23), for the reason previously mentioned. Nonetheless, it seems that there is an additional motivation for the Chronicler to exclude the story, a motivation completely overlooked by the scholarship. This son was born as a result of adultery and died because of the sins of his parents, that is, the punishment was postponed from the father to his descendent.⁸ As such, the story’s rationale stands in contradiction to the fundamental theological concept of the Chronicler, namely that everyone dies for his own sin(s).⁹ The Chronicler has adopted the justice and retribution principle that is well expressed in Deuteronomy 24:16, “Parents shall not be put to death

⁵ For another explanation for ignoring the name “Yedidyah” in Chronicles, see §IV, 2.

⁶ Accordingly, the Chronicler omits also the hint to the David and Bathsheba scene that appears in 1 Kgs 15:5; see the textual parallels in 1 Kgs 15:1–6 and 2 Chr 13:1–3.

⁷ The citation is from Pseudo-Rashi’s commentary on 1 Chr 17:13. See Kalimi, *The Retelling of Chronicles in Jewish Tradition and Literature*, pp. 199–209 esp. 204–205 and the additional references to Pseudo-Rashi’s commentary and discussion there.

⁸ On this issue, see Chapter Five, §III, 1, (9).

⁹ Similarly, Solomon’s sins caused the division of his kingdom (1 Kgs 11:11–13), but this did not take place in Solomon’s time, but after his death, and hurt his son, Rehoboam; see also 1 Kgs 15:29–30; 16:12; 16:13. This is also omitted by the Chronicler.

for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their parents; only for their own crimes may persons be put to death,” and by the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Jeremiah states: “In those days they shall say no more, the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity; every man who eats sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge” (Jer 31:29–30; cf. Ezek 18:2). Ezekiel clearly expresses: “The soul that sins, shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him” (Ezek 18:20; see also 2 Kgs 14:6 // 2 Chr 25:4).¹⁰

As a result of the omission of the text from 2 Samuel 11:1C–12:25, the reader of Chronicles has been informed about Solomon’s birth, but is not provided with any information about the circumstances that led to it.¹¹ The presentation of Solomon in the list of David’s sons who were born in Jerusalem (1 Chr 3:5–9) leads the reader to believe that Solomon was born under normal circumstances, just as in the cases of the other sons of David and the many other individuals mentioned in the genealogical lists registered before 1 Chronicles 3:5–9 and after (1:1–3:4 and 3:10–9:44).

As noted earlier, the Chronicler does not record the birth and death of Bathsheba’s first child (2 Sam 11:27; 12:13–23), nor the birth of the second child – Solomon (12:24–25). Instead, he gives the list of David’s sons as mentioned in 2 Samuel 5:14, and adds to the end of the list: “*four by Bathshua daughter of Ammiel*” (1 Chr 3:5c):

¹⁰ For this theological concept in Chronicles, see, e.g., Wellhausen, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*, pp. 198–205, i.e., idem, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*, pp. 203–210; R. B. Dillard, “Reward and Punishment in Chronicles: The Theology of Immediate Retribution,” *WTJ* 46 (1984), pp. 164–172. For additional bibliography on this issue, see I. Kalimi, *The Books of Chronicles: A Classified Bibliography*, Simor Bible Bibliography 1 (Jerusalem: Simor, 1990), pp. 95–96. Nonetheless, one must admit that the Chronicler does not systematically employ this method in his book; see, for example, 1 Chr 21:1–17; 2 Chr 25 and 32; and cf. W. Rudolph, *Chronikbücher*, Handbuch zum Alten Testament 21 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [P. Siebeck], 1955), p. xix.

¹¹ Similarly, the Chronicler also excluded from his book the “Court Story” of Solomon’s succession, which is recounted in 1 Kgs 1–2. See in detail [Chapters Ten](#) and [Eleven](#).

2 Samuel 5:14–15	1 Chronicles 3:5–6
¹⁴ These are the names of those who were born to him in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon,	⁵ a. These were born to him in Jerusalem: b. Shimea, Shobab, Nathan, ^a and Solomon c. <i>four by Bathshua, daughter of Ammiel</i> ⁶ and Ibhar, Elishama, ^b
¹⁵ Ibhar, Elishua,	

^a Interestingly, the genealogy presented in Luke 3:31 traces Jesus through Nathan rather than through Solomon as in Matt 1:6–16; see the discussion by Kalimi, *The Retelling of Chronicles in Jewish Tradition and Literature: A Historical Journey*, p. 66; idem, *Das Chronikbuch und seine Chronik*, pp. 87–88. Is the “House of Nathan” mentioned in Zech 12:12 related to the Nathan mentioned in the texts under review?

^b These names appear only here and in 1 Chr 14:4–6 (// 2 Sam 5:14–16).

The information regarding the names of the sons of David in 1 Chronicles 3 was taken from 2 Samuel 5:14–16. The Chronicler repeats this list verbatim, once again, in 1 Chronicles 14:4–7, a passage that parallels 2 Samuel 5:14–16.¹² However, although the names “Shimea, Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon” appear in 2 Samuel 5:14 and Solomon is mentioned there in the fourth spot among the eleven sons of David, no one would conclude from 1 Chronicles 14 that Bathsheba had four sons. That Bathsheba delivered four sons to David, and Solomon was the fourth and youngest one, emerges only from 1 Chronicles 3:5. This content clearly stands in contrast to what is known about the children Bathsheba bore in 2 Samuel, namely that she gave birth to two children: The first one died and the second was Solomon – the oldest and only surviving child. Besides this, there is no further information in any early text on the number of children born to Bathsheba. None offers any support for the claim that Solomon was Bathsheba’s fourth and youngest son. The following is a critical survey of several ancient and modern approaches regarding these issues, and finally my own suggestion.

The simplest solution is to omit or ignore 3:5c, as in the Syriac translation, presumably in order to avoid these difficulties. That is to

¹² This repetition in Chronicles probably stresses Solomon’s birthplace. That is to say, Solomon was born in the city that was the spiritual and cultural center of the Jewish people in the time of the Chronicler himself; see Kalimi, *An Ancient Israelite Historian*, p. 88.

say, instead of dealing with the problems, the translator(s) made them nonexistent. Similarly, there is no sign in the Talmudic and Midrashic literature of the rabbis' attempts to struggle with this issue. Either they were not aware of these contradictions or simply could not explain them. Later on, the Masoretic scribes put the disjunctive accent *zaqef-qatan* on the word "four" in order to separate the number from "Bathsheba,"¹³ as if wishing to say that not all the "four" sons were from Bathsheba.

In the medieval period, David Kimchi (1160–1235) attempted to solve various contradictions between Samuel-Kings and Chronicles. Thus, in his commentary on 1 Chronicles 3:5, he suggests that the names of the four sons in verse 5b are not listed according to the chronological order of their birth dates, but rather from the youngest to the eldest son – Solomon. Even if Kimchi is correct, however, his suggestion solves only part of the problem, that is, Solomon was the eldest son of Bathsheba. It does not solve the problem that Samuel counts one surviving son of Bathsheba, while the Chronicler lists four. Moreover, why should one consider that the sons in verse 5b are listed differently than those in 3:1–3 and 15–16 (or in any other place in Chronicles or in the Hebrew Bible), where the names usually follow chronological order?

In modern biblical scholarship, many exegetes fail either to admit the contradictions under review¹⁴ or to suggest any explanation to solve them. For instance, Sara Japhet admits that "The appearance here of Solomon as Bathsheba's fourth son, while according to all our sources he was clearly her first, is indeed difficult,"¹⁵ but she does not suggest any answer to this or the other problem (namely, that Bathsheba had only two and not four sons). Besides, according to 2 Samuel 12, Solomon was the second son of Bathsheba, rather than "her first." Some scholars, however, attempt to suggest solutions to these issues. For example, Rudolf Kittel

¹³ Cf. T. Willi, *Chronik: 1. Teilband – 1. Chronik 1,1–10,14*, Biblische Kommentar Altes Testament 24/1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2009), p. 111.

¹⁴ See for example, S. Oettli and J. Meinhold, *Die geschichtlichen Hagiographen (Chronika, Esra, Nehemia, Ruth und Esther) und das Buch Daniel*, Kurzgefasster Kommentar zu den heiligen Schriften Alten und Neuen Testaments sowie zu den Apokryphen 8 (Nördlingen: C. H. Beck, 1889), p. 22; W. E. Barnes, *The Books of Chronicles*, The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1899), p. 16; I. Benzinger, *Die Bücher der Chronik: Erklärt*, Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament 20 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [P. Siebeck], 1901), p. 11; Curtis and Madsen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Chronicles*, pp. 99–100; Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, p. 56; R. L. Braun, *1 Chronicles*, Word Biblical Commentary 14 (Waco: Word Books, 1986), p. 50, among many others.

¹⁵ See S. Japhet, *1 & 2 Chronicles: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster / John Knox Press, 1993), p. 96.

simply asserts: "The expansion of the list with 2 [sic] more names was caused by textual corruption."¹⁶ Wilhelm Rudolph considers the entire list of David's descendants in 1 Chronicles 3 to be a late post-Chronistic addition, based (in his opinion) on extrabiblical sources.¹⁷ Similarly, Rudolf Mosis considers the words "four by Bathshua daughter of Ammiel" (together with the entirety of 3:5–9) to be a secondary interpolation made by a late redactor of Chronicles according to what he found in 1 Chronicles 14:4–7.¹⁸ This approach seems to be an easy answer that creates a series of new problems. Why should the post-Chronistic writer interpolate these words (or chapter) into the text and create contradictions between Chronicles and Samuel? The Chronicler repeated the list in two places (1 Chr 3:5–9 and 14:4–7) in order to stress the birthplace of Solomon (as already noted). What was the purpose of the late interpolator repeating the list in 1 Chronicles 3:5–9? Moreover, there is no textual or philological basis to consider verse 5c a late addition.

Although the Chronicler does not include numbers in 1 Chronicles 14:4–7, he adds the number "four" in 1 Chronicles 3:5c and the number "nine" in verse 8 of the same chapter. It is reasonable to consider these numbers coming from the hand of the Chronicler rather than as "a later gloss made by someone who added the total number of children here and at the end of the verse ('nine')," as Ralph W. Klein claims.¹⁹ It is sufficient to recall that a numerical sum at the end of genealogical lists of names is a common literary-compositional feature in the Chronistic writing (see, for example, 1 Chr 2:3–4 and similar structures in 3:1–5; 3:4a, 22–24; 5:13; 7:1). It is implausible to consider all those numerical sums as late glosses. The numerical sums were apparently made by the Chronicler in order to prevent additions to or deletions from the list, either deliberately or because of erroneous interpretation. For example, the number "nine," which closes the list of David's sons born in Jerusalem (1 Chr 3:5),

¹⁶ "Besonders sind über die Vorlage hinaus die 4 ersten als Söhne der Bathseba bezeichnet. Die Erweiterung der Liste um 2 Namen wird auf Textfehlern ruhen." See R. Kittel, *Die Bücher der Chronik übersetzt und erklärt*, Handkommentar zum Alten Testament 6, 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1902), p. 22. In his comment on verse 8, Kittel attempts to explain (in my opinion unsuccessfully) how that textual corruption happened.

¹⁷ See Rudolph, *Chronikbücher*, p. 26. Notice, Rudolph does not include 1 Chr 3 within his "Gliederung der Chronikbücher," see pp. 1–5, esp. p. 1. On the possibility that the Chronicler had an extrabiblical source, see later in this section.

¹⁸ See R. Mosis, *Untersuchungen zur Theologie des chronistischen Geschichtswerkes*, Freiburger theologische Studien 92 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1973), pp. 77–78, note 86.

¹⁹ See R. W. Klein, *1 Chronicles: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), p. 115.

indicates that the repetition of the names אלישבע and אליפלט is not a mistake and that the names are not to be omitted.²⁰

Other scholars, such as Frederick E. Greenspahn, wonder: "It is hard to imagine what could have motivated the Chronicler to have moved his [i.e., Solomon's] name to the end of such a list."²¹ But the Chronicler did not move Solomon's name, he just added the note that all four were by Bathshua. The names are in the same order in 2 Samuel 5:14 and 1 Chronicles 14:4; the former simply gave no indication that all four were from Bathsheba. Likewise, a decade later, Gary N. Knoppers asserted: "It is unclear why the author [i.e., the Chronicler] makes this claim [i.e., "four by Bathshua"]."²² Nearly at the same time, Steven L. McKenzie suggested, "It may be that the Chronicler sought conformity with the pattern in [1 Chr 3] verses 1–3 of naming the mothers. Since Bathsheba is the only Jerusalem mother mentioned in 2 Samuel and since Solomon was clearly her son, the Chronicler assigned the first four names on the list (that is, up to Solomon inclusive) to her."²³ But if indeed "the Chronicler sought conformity with the pattern in verses 1–3," he could be factually accurate by assigning only Solomon to Bathsheba, and naming other mother(s) name(s) to the remaining three sons. Moreover, McKenzie's suggestion portrays the Chronicler as a poor writer who was ready to "pay too much for too little." In other words, the Chronicler was prepared to be totally inaccurate and contradictory (although not in Chronicles itself) by attributing four sons to Bathsheba (while she had only one surviving son) and putting Solomon in the fourth place (while he was her first surviving son), just in order to keep "conformity with the pattern" in his *Vorlage*, even without delivering any substantial message to his potential readers. Furthermore, if McKenzie's suggestion is correct, why did the Chronicler not name the mother(s) of the other nine sons of David (3:6–8), not to mention the unnamed sons born to unnamed concubines (3:9)?

Recently Thomas Willi has touched on this problem as well. He asserts that the fact that Solomon was the first surviving son of his mother could

²⁰ Cf. Kalimi, *Zur Geschichtsschreibung des Chronisten*, p. 250, and see also the example and discussion on pp. 266–273; idem, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 296, 315–324.

²¹ See F. E. Greenspahn, *When Brothers Dwell Together: The Preeminence of Younger Siblings in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 78.

²² See G. N. Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 1–9. A Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, *The Anchor Bible 12* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), p. 325.

²³ See McKenzie, *1–2 Chronicles*, p. 76.

not have been overlooked by the Chronicler; however, the order of the names in the *Vorlage* (2 Sam 5) was obligatory for him. Although one cannot but agree with the first part of Willi's statement, the second part of it is doubtful: If it is as Willi supposes, why does the Chronicler not keep the order of names as they appear in his *Vorlage* in several other places (for example, compare 1 Chr 21:2 with 2 Sam 24:2; 2 Chr 9:28 with 1 Kgs 10:28; 2 Chr 8:7 with 1 Kgs 9:20)? Nonetheless, Willi claims that "It is difficult to answer the question, if he [i.e., the Chronicler] sees Bathshua just as the mother of Solomon or also as the mother of the first three mentioned sons, Shimea, Shobab and Nathan."²⁴ But how could the Chronicler have answered this question more clearly than when he wrote: "Shimea, Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon *four by Bathshua*, daughter of Ammiel"?

In my opinion, 1 Chronicles 3:5c comes from the hand of the Chronicler. I have briefly discussed this elsewhere, but for whatever reason some scholars are unaware of it,²⁵ so it is worth explicitly recounting the argument: Most likely the Chronicler knew that Solomon was the first surviving son of Bathsheba. But still he repeated the list of David's four sons born in Jerusalem, which he found in 2 Samuel 5, while interpreting it according to the literary-numerical pattern of "three-four" (or "three + one"). In this new interpretation / reshaping, Solomon appears as the fourth and final son of Bathsheba. By doing so the Chronicler attempts to demonstrate the importance of Solomon by stressing that he was born in Jerusalem, and by positioning him in the fourth and last place. In other words, although Solomon was the youngest son of Bathsheba, he, above all, was elected to inherit the throne of King David. The author wished to imply that all three older sons of Bathsheba were not worthy of the kingship, but her youngest son, Solomon, was granted that privilege.

In fact, this literary feature is common in the Hebrew Bible in general and in other places in the book of Chronicles, in particular.²⁶ Thus, for example, in 1 Chronicles 28:4–5 (an "addition") the Chronicler describes

²⁴ "Schwierig ist die Frage zu beantworten, ob ihm [i.e., dem Chronist] Batschua nur als Mutter Salomos gilt oder auch als die der drei erstgenannten Söhne Schima, Schobab und Natan," see Willi, *Chronik*, p. 111.

²⁵ See Kalimi, *Zur Geschichtsschreibung des Chronisten*, p. 306; idem, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History*, p. 365.

²⁶ For a detailed discussion, see Kalimi, *Zur Geschichtsschreibung des Chronisten*, pp. 305–310, esp. pp. 305–307; idem, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 362–368, esp. pp. 362–364.

Solomon as God's chosen king. He also forms his description there in the literary-numerical pattern of "three-four," where he locates Solomon in the *fourth* and *final* place. Moreover, this literary feature appears regarding the structuring of the lists of the sons of Josiah in 1 Chronicles 3:15, and the sons of Saul in 1 Chronicles 8:33 (i.e., 9:39). In both cases, the son who took his father's place as king is named *last*, despite actually having been born earlier. Neither reordering is explicitly noted by the Chronicler, and is evident only through comparison with the parallels in Samuel-Kings.²⁷ The same pattern is also used explicitly in a non-genealogical context in Chronicles, in 2 Chronicles 20:25–26: "They were *three days* gathering the booty, it was so much; and on the *fourth day* they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah; for there they blessed the Lord." To mention just one example from outside the Chronistic work: Judah is also mentioned in the *fourth* place among the sons of Jacob: after the rejection of the first three sons – Reuben, Simeon, and Levi (because of their evil deeds); Judah took the favorable spot, and the kingship is given to him (Gen 49:3–12; cf. Gen 34; 35:22–23).

In addition, Solomon's importance also emerges from his location on the list of David's sons, as correctly noted by Klein: "Of the nineteen sons of David mentioned in 1 Chr 3:1–8, Solomon occupies position number *ten*, the exact center, with nine before him and nine after him."²⁸

It is questionable, therefore, whether the Chronicler indeed had "access to sources unknown to the Deuteronomist,"²⁹ at least in the case under review. Moreover, even if the Chronicler had access to such a source, it still should not be automatically assumed that the source is historically reliable and should be preferred over the old tradition in the book of Samuel. Accordingly, it is mistaken to deduce any historical conclusion based on the text of 1 Chronicles 3:5c, given the well-known literary motif of a youngest son who rises to power, and the literary formulation of the earlier text from Samuel according to the numerical structure of "three-four," and its nesting within a longer sequence in which Solomon also has the honored "tenth" position, which is itself a typological

²⁷ For a detailed discussion of these lists in Chronicles, see Kalimi, *Zur Geschichtsschreibung des Chronisten*, pp. 306–307; idem, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History*, p. 364.

²⁸ See Klein, *1 Chronicles*, p. 116.

²⁹ Contra Mazar, "The Time of David and Solomon," in Malamat (ed.), *The History of the Jewish People: The Age of the Monarchies*, p. 74; S. S. Tuell, *First and Second Chronicles, Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), p. 25. Cf. Rudolph, *Chronikbücher*, p. 26, who assumes that the post-Chronistic writer added this chapter (i.e., 1 Chr 3) to the book of Chronicles, based on extrabiblical sources.

number (compare, for example, Gen 31:7, 41; Lev 26:26; Num 14:22; Job 19:3; Dan 1:20).³⁰

III. SOLOMON'S BIRTH IN THE *WISDOM OF SOLOMON*

The apocryphal book, the *Wisdom of Solomon*, was written in the late Second Temple period, sometime between 220 BCE and 50 CE.³¹ This Jewish work was ascribed to Solomon, though that attribution was doubted already in premodern times.³² Interestingly, a passage in this work offers the only detailed description of Solomon's birth in the entire Second Temple literature:

I [i.e., Solomon] also am mortal, like everyone else, a descendant of the first-formed child of earth; and in the womb of a mother I was molded into flesh, within the period of ten months, compacted with blood, from the seed of a man and the pleasure of marriage. And when I was born, I began to breathe the common air, and fell upon the kindred earth; my first sound was a cry, as is true of all. I was nursed with care in swaddling clothes. For no king has had a different beginning of existence; there is for all one entrance into life, and one way out (*Wisdom* 7:1–6).

Solomon's name is never explicitly mentioned in the text of the *Wisdom of Solomon*, but it is clear that he is the implicit speaker, as this "king" goes on to describe how he prayed for wisdom (*Wisdom* 7:7–9:18; cf. 1 Kgs 3) and built the Temple (*Wisdom* 9:8). However, the passage is neither a historical account of Solomon's birth nor an interpretation of the story in 2 Samuel 12. Instead, it describes the same birth process that is true of all natural births across the world. The point of this passage is to emphasize Solomon's similarity with all other mortals.

³⁰ On this issue in more detail, see Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 363–364, with references to scholars who load this text with historical credibility (e.g., S. Yeivin; and similarly Ahituv, "Designation of Solomon to the Kingdom in the Biblical Historiography," p. 5*).

³¹ See e.g., D. Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 43 (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1979), pp. 20–25; R. D. Chesnutt, "Wisdom of Solomon," in M. D. Coogan (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Books of the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), vol. 2, pp. 457–464, esp. p. 457; A. T. Glicksman, *The Wisdom of Solomon 10: A Jewish Hellenistic Reinterpretation of Early Israelite History through Sapiential Lenses*, Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies 9 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2011), pp. 14–24.

³² Already some manuscripts of the Syriac Peshiṭta include the following superscription: "The book of the Great Wisdom of Solomon, son of David, of which there is uncertainty whether another wise man of the Hebrews wrote it in a prophetic spirit, while (putting it) in the name of Solomon"; see Glicksman, *The Wisdom of Solomon* 10, pp. 6–7.

IV. THE NAMES OF SOLOMON IN THE SECOND TEMPLE PERIOD LITERATURE

1. *The Meanings of “Shlomoh” in Chronicles*

While in the book of Samuel (or if you wish, the Deuteronomistic history) Bathsheba’s son received two names – Shlomoh and Yedidyah (2 Sam 12:24–25), in the book of Chronicles (or the Chronistic history) the child was presented only with the name Shlomoh. According to the “addition” in 1 Chronicles 22:8–9, his name was given to him neither by David nor by Bathsheba (2 Sam 12:24),³³ but rather by the Lord himself, even before his birth:

ויהי עלי דבר יהוה לאמור...
הנה בן נולד לך הוא יהיה איש מנוחה והנחתיו לו מכל אויביו מסביב
כי שלמה יהיה שמו ושלום ושקט אתן על ישראל בימיו.

And the word of the Lord came to me, saying . . . Behold, a son shall be born to you, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies around; for his name shall be *Shlomoh*, and I will give *shalom* [peace] and quiet to Israel in his days.³⁴

It seems that although the name Shlomoh is not mentioned (or even alluded to) in the Nathan prophecy (1 Chr 17 // 2 Sam 7), the Chronicler retrospectively (*post eventum*) considered Solomon’s birth, reign, and Temple-building to be the fulfillment of Nathan’s prophecy (1 Chr 17:11–12 // 2 Sam 7:12–13).³⁵ Thus the Chronicler went one step further and deduced that Solomon’s name was also given by the Lord himself. According to him, the child was named Shlomoh, before he was born, against the background of his future peaceful period of reign. Notice that the phrase in 1 Chronicles 22:9, והנחתיו לו מכל אויביו מסביב, refers – in chiasmic order – to 2 Samuel 7:1b: ויהוה הניח לו מסביב מכל אויביו,³⁶ unless it is drawn from 1 Kings 5:4 [ET, 4:24], where the phrase occurs similarly,

³³ On this matter, see the discussion in [Chapter Five, §V](#).

³⁴ In his commentary on 2 Sam 12:24 David Kimchi states that the Lord – rather than David – named him Solomon. Thus he harmonizes between the contradictory texts of Samuel and Chronicles.

³⁵ On this issue, see [Chapter Eleven, §VI](#).

³⁶ Though there the phrase was said regarding David, and the Chronicler omitted it for his own reasons; see Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 36–39. For the relation of these verses in Chronicles to the Nathan Prophecy (2 Sam 7 // 1 Chr 17), see also [Chapter Thirteen, §II](#).

ושלום היה לו מכל-עבריו **מסביב** (which could also be a chiastic allusions to 2 Sam 7:1b; cf. also 1 Kgs 5:18 [ET, 5:4]).

The phenomenon of God or a divine messenger naming a child before birth, was most likely known to the Chronicler from other cases in the earlier “biblical” writings, for example, regarding Ishmael and Isaac (Gen 16:11; 17:19) as well as from the report in 1 Kings 13:2 regarding King Josiah of Judah, and in Isaiah 7:14 regarding the young woman’s child that shall be called “Immanuel.”³⁷ The phenomenon of assigning someone to a high position, already in his mother’s womb, is also well known in biblical and ancient Near Eastern literature (e.g., Jer 1:4–5 and Isa 49:1).³⁸

The Chronicist historian provides double explanations for the name Shlomoh (both in texts that have no parallel in the Hebrew Bible or elsewhere):

The first one derives the name Shlomoh from the word *shalom*, as stated in 1 Chronicles 22:9. As is expounded earlier, the Chronicler possibly interpreted the name Shlomoh against the background of his peaceful reign. At the same time, it is also possible that the Chronicler borrowed this explanation from earlier scriptures, such as, 1 Kings 5:4–5 (ET: 4:24–25):

ושלום היה לו מכל עבריו מסביב. וישב יהודה וישראל לבטח איש תחת תחת גפנו ותחת תאנתו מן ועד באר שבע כל ימי שלמה.

And he had *shalom* [peace] on all sides around him. And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan to Beer-sheba, all the days of *Shlomoh*.

Also in Psalm 72, which is ascribed to Solomon, the word *shalom* is emphasized (see especially verses 3 and 7). Nonetheless, the Chronicler made his explanation straightforward and clear.

The second explanation derives the name Shlomoh from the word *shalem* (“complete,” “perfect”). This explanation refers to the king himself. It appears twice in Chronicles, both as puns: once in 1 Chronicles 28:9, ואתה שלמה בני דע את אלהי אביך ועבדהו בלב שלם ובנפש חפצה, (*Shlomoh*, my son, know the God of your father, and serve him with a *shalem* heart and a willing spirit”). And once again in 1 Chronicles 29:19:

³⁷ See also later on in Matt 1:21; Luke 1:13, 31.

³⁸ See in detail Chapter Six, §III, (c).

ולשלמה בני תן לבב שלם לשמור מצותיך (“And as for *Shlomoh* my son, give him a *shalem* heart that he may observe your commandments”).³⁹

2. The Name “Yedidyah” in Psalms and Nehemiah, and its Absence from Other Second Temple Literature

Except for Solomon’s birth story in 2 Samuel 12:25, the name Yedidyah does not appear as a male name in the Hebrew Bible, but only once in 2 Kings 22:1 as a female name – the name of King Josiah’s mother. However, it seems to be alluded to a few times in the late biblical literature.

Though the exact date of composition for Psalm 127 is unknown, at some point it came to be ascribed to King Solomon (verse 1a). The words כן יתן לידיו שנה (“for truly to *his beloved* he gives sleep”)⁴⁰ in verse 2 probably alludes to the name Yedidyah in 2 Samuel 12:25.

The name Yedidyah is also alluded to in Nehemiah. Contrary to the Chronicler who omits any clues to Solomon’s sins, the author of this late biblical historical composition states that King Solomon was led astray by foreign women (Neh 13:26a), as is recounted in the Deuteronomistic history (1 Kgs 11:1–13; 2 Kgs 23:13).⁴¹ According to this verse in Nehemiah, Solomon sinned despite the fact that he was “beloved to his God” (וַאֲהָבָה לַאלֹהִיו הָיָה, Neh 13:26b). This phrase clearly refers to יהוה אהבו (“and the Lord loved him”) and the name Yedidyah (meaning “the Lord loved him”) in 2 Samuel 12:24–25, though the name itself does not appear in Nehemiah.

As already mentioned (see §II), the Chronicler does not use the theophoric name Yedidyah in his book, possibly in order to avoid alluding to the story of David’s adultery with Bathsheba. For the Chronicler, David and Bathsheba’s fourth child only had one name, i.e., Solomon. This name had been given to the child directly by the Lord with His special

³⁹ For the explanation of the name Solomon in the books of Kings and Chronicles, compare Kalimi, *An Ancient Israelite Historian*, pp. 77–78, 79.

⁴⁰ On the word שנה, see the discussion in F. L. Hossfeld and E. Zenger, *Psalmen 101–150*, Herder Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2008), pp. 528–529.

⁴¹ The author of Neh 13:26 could refer only to the Deuteronomistic history, which in this case served his purpose well. In any case, he could not refer to Chronicles, because the Chronic history did not yet exist. Moreover, even if one would assume that Chronicles had existed, still the Chronicler does not mention any sin of Solomon. See Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 8–9; idem, *An Ancient Israelite Historian*, pp. 54–56.

blessing, even before the child was born. Thus, the Chronicler had no need to refer to the name Yedidyah, which had been given to the newborn child by the prophet Nathan (2 Sam 12:25). Further, the Chronicler had a special interest in connecting Solomon with *shalom*, emphasizing Solomon's peaceful reign as the justification for his authorization to build the Temple, in contrast to his father David's wars and bloodshed (1 Chr 22:7–10, see also 28:1–7, both “additions”).⁴²

Interestingly, the *Wisdom of Solomon*, the *Testament of Solomon*, and Josephus also do not mention the name Yedidyah. As noted, the *Wisdom of Solomon* only refers to Solomon by name in its superscription, which is presumably secondary (beyond this, the book does not mention any proper names at all), but the *Testament of Solomon* refers to him as Solomon repeatedly (e.g., 1:3, 5, 13). In his *Jewish Antiquities* 7.158 Josephus writes: “and she conceived and bore a son, whom he named Solomon, at the bidding of the prophet Nathan.” However, according to 2 Samuel 12:25 Nathan named the child Yedidyah, while David (or Bathsheba) named him Solomon. Has Josephus been influenced by the Chronicler, who recounts that it was the Lord who gave the name Solomon to the child, and thus never mentions the name Yedidyah?

3. Ben Sira's Wordplays on the Names “Shlomoh” and “Yedidyah”

In the last part of his book, *The Praise of the Ancestors* (Ben Sira 44–50), Joshua Ben Sira (ca. 180 BCE) mentions several kings of Israel, among them Solomon. The author praises Solomon but in the same breath also rebukes him.⁴³ He dedicates a relatively large space to Solomon (47:12–23), comparable to that which Ben Sira dedicated to his father,

⁴² See in detail, Chapter Thirteen, §II.

⁴³ On Solomon in the book of *Ben Sira*, see Torijano, *Solomon the Esoteric King*, pp. 33–35; P. C. Beentjes, “The Countries Marveled at You, King Solomon in *Ben Sira* 47,12–22,” in “Happy the One Who Meditates on Wisdom” (*Sir.* 14,20): *Collected Essays on the Book of Ben Sira*, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 43 (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), pp. 135–144 (i.e., *Bijdragen* 45 [1984], pp. 6–14); B. G. Wright III, “Solomon in Chronicles and Ben Sira: A Study in Contrasts,” in J. Corley and H. van Grol (eds.), *Rewriting Biblical History: Essays on Chronicles and Ben Sira in Honor of Pancratius C. Beentjes*, Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies 7 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2011), pp. 139–157.

David (47:1–11).⁴⁴ What is relevant to our theme is Ben Sira's wordplays (puns) on both the names Shlomoh and Yedidyah.

In *Ben Sira* 47:13 the author links the name *Shlomoh* to the noun *shalvah* ("peace," "serene," "quietude"): ואל הניח לו מסביב / שלוח מלך בימי שלוח ("*Solomon* reigned during an age of *peace* / because God gave him rest [from his enemies] around"). This is similar to the derivation of the Chronicler, *Shlomoh* – *shalom* in 1 Chronicles 22:8–9 (see §IV, 1). Later on, in the Hebrew text of *Ben Sira* 47:18 the author connects Solomon's name with the divine name, possibly referring to the name Yedidyah in 2 Samuel 12:25: נקראת בשם הנכבד / הנקרא על ישראל ("You were called by the honored name which is called upon Israel").⁴⁵ In fact, in several scriptures Israel was also called *yedid* (beloved) of the Lord or the one whom God loves (e.g., Jer 11:15; Isa 63:9; Ps 60:7 [ET 60:5]; 108:7 [ET 108:6]; see also Jer 14:9 and Deut 28:10, where Israel is referred to as one "called by your [i.e., God's] name").

Moshe Zvi Segal's interpretation of the words "You were called by the honored name" as referring also to the name *Shlomoh*, connected with the word *shalom*,⁴⁶ is less probable. Although the word *shalom* is used as a divine name in the rabbinic literature (e.g., *Sifre* on Num 6:24; Deut 28:10), it is not clear if it was used also in the Scriptures in this way. Segal refers to the commemorative name יהוה שלום in the declaration of Gideon, regarding the altar that he built (Judg 6:24): ויבן שם גבעון מזבח ליהוה ויקרא לו יהוה שלום. But even if this is read as "the Lord is peace/safety" that does not make *shalom* a divine name (and the expression might simply mean "[altar of] the Lord of peace/safety," as some consider the noun שלום as genitive).⁴⁷ In fact, there are several examples of altars with commemorative names:

⁴⁴ The Hebrew text of *Ben Sira* 47 is preserved in Manuscript B, dated to the twelfth century CE (so P. C. Beentjes, *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew: A Text Edition of All Extant Hebrew Manuscripts and a Synopsis of All Parallel Hebrew Ben Sira Texts*, Supplements to *Vetus Testamentum* 68 [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997], p. 5, without discussion), for the text see *ibid.*, pp. 83–85.

⁴⁵ Compare, for example, P. W. Skehan and A. A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira: A New Translation with Notes, Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 39 (New York: Doubleday, 1987), p. 527. The Greek version offers a different interpretation.

⁴⁶ See M. Z. Segal, *The Complete Book of Ben Sira* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1972), p. 328.

⁴⁷ Cf. G. F. Moore, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Judges*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1895), p. 189; Y. Kaufmann, *The Book of Judges* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sepher, 1973), p. 162.

Genesis 33:20, ויצב שם מזבח ויקרא לו אל אלהי ישראל

Genesis 35:7, ויבן שם מזבח ויקרא למקום אל בית-אל

Exodus 17:15, ויבן משה מזבח ויקרא שמו יהוה נסי

Similar names are, for example, יהוה צדקנו (Gen 22:14), יהוה שמה (Jer 33:16), יהוה שמה (Ezek 48:35). No one considers יהוה or צדקנו or שמה to be divine names, so why should we consider the word שלום in Judges 6:24 to be a God's name? Thus, it is most likely that when in *Ben Sira* 47:18 the author connects Solomon's name with the divine name this is another allusion to Yedidyah.

4. Was "Qohelet" the Third Name of Solomon?

The book of Qohelet (/ Koheleth; also called Ecclesiastes) claims that its author was "Qohelet," introduces him as "the son of David, king in Jerusalem" (Qoh 1:1) and describes him, like Solomon, as one who seeks wisdom (cf. Qoh 1:12–13 with 1 Kgs 3:6–9). Similar to Solomon, Qohelet was not only very wise but also rich (Qoh 1:16–18; 2:4–9). Thus, Qohelet can be seen as an allusion to Solomon, and was understood in this way by the talmudic sages, who assumed that in addition to the names Shlomoh and Yedidyah, Solomon bore the name Qohelet. The rabbis also explain that Solomon was called *Qohelet* (from *qhl*, "the one who assembles") because he taught in assemblies, as it says: "Then assembled Solomon." (1 Kgs 8:1).⁴⁸ A comparable opinion was expressed by some medieval Jewish commentators, such as Rashi (שקיהל חכמות הרבה; literally: "he assembled numerous wisdoms") and Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra,⁴⁹ and also by some modern exegetes, for instance, Mordechai Zer-Kabod.⁵⁰ However, as already noted by other scholars, the similarities between Solomon and Qohelet are just a Solomonic fiction in the first chapters of the book of Qohelet, which "the prosaically minded editor mistook for authorship."⁵¹ It is unlikely that Qohelet was a name or

⁴⁸ See Midrash *Qoheleth Rabbah* 1:1; Midrash *Song of Songs Rabbah* 1:1; *Seder Olam Rabbah* 15; Babylonian Talmud, *Baba Batra* 15a.

⁴⁹ See their commentaries on Qoh 1:1.

⁵⁰ See M. Zer-Kabod, *Qoheleth*, Daat Mikra [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1973), pp. 3–4, 8.

⁵¹ G. A. Barton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ecclesiastes*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908), pp. 58–59, 67; see also R. E. Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, Word Biblical Commentary 23A (Dallas: Word Books, 1992), pp. 1–2; B. Willmes, *Menschliches Schicksal und ironische Weisheitskritik im Kohelethbuch*, Biblisch-Theologische Studien 39 (Neukirchen-Vluyn:

nickname of Solomon.⁵² In fact, the name Solomon never appears in the book of Qohelet and, despite all that is discussed earlier, there is no explicit identification of Qohelet with Solomon in this or any other biblical book. That Solomon could not be the author of Qohelet is clear from the postexilic Hebrew of the book, which implies a late date of composition (Persian or even early Hellenistic period, as some scholars conclude).⁵³ Moreover, the author of Qohelet 6:2 uses an idiom from the book of Chronicles (2 Chr 1:11b),⁵⁴ which was composed in the Persian era. Thus, the language and the late date of the book contradict the identification of the author of Qohelet with Solomon. Probably, the Rabbis' intention was to identify the unknown speaker of the book with the well-known biblical prototype of wisdom, i.e., Solomon, and by attributing it to him underscore the disputed holiness of the book of Qohelet (Babylonian Talmud, *Sabbath* 30b; *Abot deRabbi Nathan*, Text A, I),⁵⁵ in order to include it in the Jewish/Hebrew Canon. It is noteworthy that the inclusion of Proverbs and the Song of Songs in the Hebrew canon were also disputed among the Rabbis. Finally they were accepted into the canon due to their attribution to King Solomon.

A typological example for such a process could be pointed out in the Christian canon of the New Testament. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews does not belong to the first generation of Christians. Rather, the Letter to the Hebrews was composed some time around 80 CE, and "by the end of the second century some were attributing Hebrews to Paul," in order to include it in the Christian canon. Finally, in the late fourth- and early fifth-century canonical lists, "Hebrews was counted within the fourteen Pauline letters" of the Christian canon.⁵⁶

Neukirchener, 2000), pp. 80–82; L. Schwienhorst-Schönberger, *Kohelet*, Herder Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2004), pp. 140–141.

⁵² See also R. Gordis, *Koheleth – The Man and His Word: A Study of Ecclesiastes*, 3rd ed. (New York: Schocken, 1968), pp. 75–78; J. L. Crenshaw, "Ecclesiastes, Book of," D. N. Freedman et al. (ed.), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), vol. 2, pp. 271–280 esp. 271.

⁵³ On this issue, see the secondary literature listed in Kalimi, *An Ancient Israelite Historian*, p. 51, note 52.

⁵⁴ See Kalimi, *The Retelling of Chronicles in Jewish Tradition and Literature*, p. 17.

⁵⁵ For *Abot deRabbi Nathan*, Text A, I, see J. Goldin (ed.), *The Fathers according to Rabbi Nathan*, Yale Judaica Series 10 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), p. 5.

⁵⁶ See, e.g., R. E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, The Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1997), pp. 693–697, esp. p. 693.

V. CONCLUSION: THE AMBIGUITY OF SOLOMON

This chapter discusses the birth and names of Solomon in late biblical historical literature, particularly in the Chronistic history, in the context of the wider Second Temple period literature on Solomon. In contrast to the early biblical historiography, the later one has no interest in Solomon's usurpation of the throne, and uses accounts of Solomon's birth and names for other purposes. Thus in Chronicles, Solomon is presented as one who was born under normal circumstances, the fourth and the youngest son of Bathsheba, but still gained the kingship. Also, in the *Wisdom of Solomon* the normal, natural character of Solomon's birth is strongly emphasized. But the Chronicler's placement of Solomon within this list does not *just* downplay the unusual circumstances of his birth; it also corresponds to the literary form of "three-four," whereby future leaders are often identified as the *fourth* son, after three previous sons are rejected (e.g., Gen 49:3–12; 1 Chr 28:4–5, and the use of this motif in the Succession Narrative in Samuel-Kings). Thus, by placing Solomon in the fourth and final place among Bathsheba's sons, the Chronicler alludes to his future role. At the same time, Solomon is also in the middle of the nineteen names of David's sons, i.e., in the tenth place, which shows his centrality.

Further, the Chronicler completely excluded from his book every hint of the story of David's affair with Bathsheba, and the birth and death of their first son. These stories are not in accordance with the Chronicler's generally positive descriptions of core Israelite heroes. Moreover, the birth and death of the first son of Bathsheba also conflicts with the Chronicler's strict theological line of thought regarding reward and punishment, whereby no one may be punished for another's sins. According to the Chronicler, God elected Solomon as his chosen king, and he himself called him Solomon (rather than Yedidyah, as in 2 Sam 12:25). The Chronicler interprets Solomon's name twice, explaining its root in different ways (*Shlomoh* – *shalom* and *Shlomoh* – *shalem*). He did not feel any necessity to mention the name Yedidyah, because it may hint at David's adultery with Bathsheba, and because the name Solomon itself had been given to the child by the Lord even prior to his birth. By contrast, the books of Psalms and Nehemiah allude to the name Yedidyah, although they do not mention it explicitly.

In *The Praise of the Ancestors*, Ben Sira derives the name Shlomoh from the noun *shalvah* ("peace"), and the name Yedidyah as it is explained in 2 Samuel 12:25. "Qohelet son of David," however, is not identical with Solomon. This identification is hinted in the first chapters of the book and

suggested explicitly later on in the postbiblical Jewish tradition, in order to include the book of Qohelet within the Hebrew canon.

One can detect two clear trends in Jewish literature of the Second Temple period: the one – in Chronicles and Qohelet, which were later followed by the Rabbis (as well as by the *Wisdom of Solomon*) – all only praised King Solomon. The Chronicler used the name Solomon exclusively, while the author of the opening chapters of Ecclesiastes refers to him as Qohelet. Both they, the *Wisdom of Solomon*, *Testament of Solomon*, and Josephus ignore the theophoric name Yedidyah. The other trend – in Nehemiah and *Ben Sira* (as well as the *Testament of Solomon*) – praises the king but in the same breath also rebukes him. Though given the name Yedidyah (“beloved of the Lord”), the king still sinned. It seems that both trends have had a didactic purpose. The former presents a role model of a completely righteous king. In contrast, the latter demonstrates that even the “beloved of the Lord” failed, despite his great wisdom. Thus, these texts emphasize that one should always be careful to observe the divine commandments.

CHAPTER 8

Solomon's Pre-Monarchic Life in Biblical Historiography

I. INTRODUCTION

Neither Samuel-Kings nor Chronicles gives any direct information about Solomon's pre-monarchic life or his physical appearance. Therefore, very little can be said about these aspects of the man on a historical level. My focus in this chapter and the next is on the compositional and editorial methods of the biblical historians, regarding particularly what, how, and why Solomon's pre-monarchic life and appearance are presented as they are.

Since the Succession Narrative (roughly, 2 Sam 9–20 + 1 Kgs 1–2) does tell the story of Solomon's birth and accession to the throne, it raises questions about what happened in between those events, and why such information has not been presented. This chapter attempts to bridge the gap between the two, while examining some scholars' speculations about Solomon's pre-monarchic life.

II. SOLOMON: FROM BIRTH TO THRONE ACCESSION

After the short report about Solomon's birth in 2 Samuel 12:24–25,¹ there is not even a tiny piece of information about him in the entire text of 2 Samuel 13–24. The next time that we hear *about Solomon* is in the throne-succession story in 1 Kings 1, where the narrator notifies us that Solomon was not among those invited to participate in the party of his

¹ This was probably some months after David's siege of the Ammonite capital, Rabbah See Chapter Five, §III, 2, C.

brother Adonijah (1 Kgs 1:9–10), at which the latter had himself announced as the future king. Even in the story of his own coronation, Solomon remains silent and passive, and leaves Nathan, Bathsheba, and others to act for him (1 Kgs 1:11–40). In contrast to his half-brothers, Absalom and Adonijah, Solomon never expressed a desire for his father's crown, nor did he perform any action to inherit it. The first time that we hear *Solomon's voice* is after his coronation, when he is asked to decide on the destiny of Adonijah, who sought asylum in the holy place in Jerusalem (1 Kgs 1:52–53).

In contrast to Saul, about whom there are some biographical stories prior to his coronation (1 Sam 9:1–10:16), and David, regarding whom a whole sequence of events is recounted prior to his accession to Saul's throne (1 Sam 16:11–30:31), there is no such story about Solomon. Even David's other sons, such as Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah, appear in various tales in Samuel-Kings (2 Sam 13–19; 1 Kgs 1:5–10), but nothing is said about Solomon. The reader is given no information about Solomon's relationships with his parents, half-brothers, and sisters, as is reported – at least to some extent – about Amnon and Tamar, Amnon and Absalom, Adonijah, and his other brothers (2 Sam 13:1–33; 1 Kgs 1:9, 25).²

1. *Was Nathan Solomon's Guardian?*

Despite the lacuna in the biblical text about Solomon's childhood and pre-monarchic life, several scholars have interpreted the phrase in 2 Samuel 12:25 (MT), וישלח ביד נתן הנביא “and he [i.e., the Lord] sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet,” as if it read “and he [i.e., David] committed *him* [i.e., Solomon] to the charge [lit., put in the hand] of Nathan the prophet.” Therefore, they deduce that Nathan was appointed Solomon's guardian and served as his educator.

Thus, for example, Otto Thenius claims that David (not the Lord) is the subject of the verb וישלח, and appeals for support to the Vulgate, which he cites as “*misitque eum in manu Nathan prophetae*” (“and he [i.e., David] put *him* in the hand of the Prophet Nathan”).³ However, the

² Similarly, see also the stories about Joseph and his brothers in Gen 37–50.

³ “Und er sandte durch *Nathan*, den Propheten, und nannte seinen Namen u. s. w.; nach dem Texte ganz richtig; allein *David* ist Subj[ekt] des vorigen V[ers]. *Vulg[ata]* hat: *misitque eum in manu N[athan]*, also וישלח, woraus sich der ganz passende Sinn ergibt: und er (*Dav[id]*) übergab ihn ... in die Hand *N[athan]* des *Pr[opheten]*. (zur Erziehung).

Vulgate actually reads “et Dominus dilexit *eum* misitque in manu Nathan prophetae” (“and the Lord loved *him* and sent in [or by] the hand of the Prophet Nathan”); that is, *eum* (“him”) is the direct object of *dilexit* (“he loved”), not of *misit* (“he sent”).

Although the Vulgate version is nothing more than a literalistic rendering of the Hebrew text, this interpretation is also followed by Julius Wellhausen and Karl Budde.⁴ The latter accepts Wellhausen's suggestion to emend the MT וישלח to וישלם or וישלמו, and translates it as: “and he transferred him to Nathan” (“und er übergab ihn Natan”), concluding: “It deals with the education of the young prince, and through this activity Nathan won the position that he occupied in 1 Kings 1.”⁵

This line of interpretation is followed by other scholars. For example, Tryggve N. D. Mettinger concludes (without referring to any previous literature) that Nathan “was perhaps responsible for the education of Solomon (2 Sam 12:25 *text. emend.*).”⁶ Similarly, John Mauchline asserts that 2 Samuel 12:25 could be translated as: “and committed him to the care of Nathan the prophet.” He deduces that this “would imply that Nathan was to be his [i.e., Solomon's] tutor.”⁷

Indeed, such a record would serve as an interesting piece of biographical data, but it is unlikely to be the intended meaning of 2 Samuel 12:25, as has already been recognized by scholars, such as S. R. Driver, A. F. Kirkpatrick, Wilhelm Caspari, Hans-Wilhelm Hertzberg, and

Für die Richtigkeit dieser LA. [i.e., Leseart] bürgt die *allgemeine Annahme*, dass Nathan Erzieher Sal[omo]s gewesen sei” (“And he sent by Nathan the prophet, and called his name, and so on”; is correct according to the text; only David is sub[ject] to the previous v[er]se]. Vul[gate] has: *misitque eum in manu N[athan]*, so וישלח, which results in the entirely appropriate sense: *and he (i.e., Dav[id]) sent him to N[athan] the pr[o]phet* (for education). The validity of this reading vouches for the common assumption that Nathan was Sal[omon]'s educator.”); O. Thenius, *Die Bücher Samuels*, Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament 4, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1864), p. 199.

⁴ J. Wellhausen, *Der Text der Bücher Samuelis untersucht* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1871), p. 185; K. Budde, *Die Bücher Samuel: Erklärt*, Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament 8 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [P. Siebeck], 1902), pp. 257–258.

⁵ Budde, *Die Bücher Samuel: Erklärt*, pp. 257–258, “Es wird sich um die Erziehung des jungen Prinzen handeln, und durch diese Thätigkeit gewann Natan die Stellung, die er in I Reg 1 einnimmt.”

⁶ See Mettinger, *Solomonic State Officials*, p. 152.

⁷ J. Mauchline, *1 and 2 Samuel*, New Century Bible (London: Oliphants, 1971), p. 256.

Hans-Joachim Stoebe.⁸ Instead, the expression שלח ביד should be understood, as is usual elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, to mean “to send something by a messenger” (e.g., 2 Sam 11:14; 15:36; see also Exod 4:13; Jer 29:3; Prov 26:6; Esth 3:13).⁹ Therefore, neither this verse nor anything else in Samuel-Kings should be understood as providing information regarding Solomon’s upbringing. The text simply skips from his birth to his adulthood, without regard for what happened in between. Nor is this unusual: Solomon is not the only leader in the Hebrew Bible for whom there is an information gap between his birth story and rise to power. For example, there is no biographical or other information about Moses from the time that he was born and saved by the daughter of Pharaoh (Exod 2:1–10) until his recognition of Israelite oppression as an adult (2:11). The detailed birth story of the ruler (“judge”) Samson (Judg 13:1–24) ends as follows: “And the woman bore a son, and called his name Samson; and the child grew, and the Lord blessed him” (13:24). Except for “And the spirit of the Lord began to stir him in Mahaneh-Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol” (13:25), which clarifies and explains the expression “and the Lord blessed him,” there is no biographical information whatsoever about Samson’s life between his birth and his marriage and activities as a leader (Judg 14–16). Similarly, stories about any king’s childhood are very rare in the biblical literature, preserved only in those cases when something significant occurred that has importance for the further description of the king, such as in the case of King Joash of Judah.¹⁰

It is an open question whether the author(s)/editor(s) of Samuel-Kings (and those of their sources, such as the Succession Narrative) simply had no supplementary or relevant information about Solomon’s activities between his birth and rise to power, or whether they had such information, and simply chose not to pass it along. After all, this kind of

⁸ “[T]o make wholly over to [ישלם or וישלמו], to deliver up, is an Aram[ae]an sense of השלים (e.g., D[eu]t. 32, 30 Onk[elos] for אשלימנין . . .), in Heb[rew]. found at most in late poetry (Is. 38, 12. 13 LXX . . .); so it is not a very likely word to have been used here”; see S. R. Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text and the Topography of the Books of Samuel*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), p. 293. Also, Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg correctly notes that “The text . . . makes sense without this expedient”; Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel*, p. 317. Caspari (*Die Samuelbücher*, p. 545) rejects that opinion without explicit justification. See also A. F. Kirkpatrick, *The Second Book of Samuel with Notes and Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1919), p. 132; Stoebe, *Das zweite Buch Samuelis*, pp. 300, 311–312.

⁹ Compare Stoebe, *Das zweite Buch Samuelis*, p. 300, and the earlier bibliography there.

¹⁰ See Chapter Twelve, §II, 2.

information was not usually preserved in the royal archives, but by stories passed anecdotally. Whatever sources of information might have been available to its author, the Succession Narrative focuses on the contrast between Solomon and three of his adult brothers as potential successors – Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah. As for the compilers of Samuel-Kings, they have given no other information about Solomon's childhood than what was found in the Succession Narrative itself, probably because that was the only narrative source they had regarding Solomon's pre-monarchic life. Though it is also possible that they had some other source of information, which they considered unnecessary to mention, there is no evidence for this. Therefore, the most that can be inferred historically is that Solomon grew up as a prince in Jerusalem, and presumably had a childhood much like that of other children of David, about whom we know nothing except their names. Since neither Samuel-Kings nor Chronicles devotes any attention to these matters, there is no textual ground to speculate about any aspects of Solomon's childhood beyond this.

2. Solomon's Age and Marital Status at the Time of His Accession

Solomon was young at his accession to David's throne. The talmudic rabbis assumed that he was only twelve years old when he became a king over Israel (*Seder Olam Rabbah* 14). However, the most that can be said with certainty is that Solomon was young at that time, as stressed in 1 Kings 3:7 (נער קטן, "a little [or, young] boy") and 1 Chronicles 29:1 (נער ורד, "young and inexperienced"). Several scholars argue that he was probably between sixteen and nineteen years old.¹¹ According to 1 Kings 1:48 and 11:42, Solomon reigned for forty years, including three years of co-regency with his father. 1 Kings 14:21 recounts that Rehoboam, the son of Solomon and Naamah the Ammonite, was forty-one years old when he took over his father's throne. If Solomon's forty-year reign is not approximate or typological, then Rehoboam was already a year old when Solomon became king. This implies that Solomon was married to Naamah and was already a father before his succession.

If Solomon was married before taking the throne, however, this is never explicitly stated in Samuel-Kings, which gives no information apart from the bare references to his marriages to the daughter of Pharaoh

¹¹ See Kalimi *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 45–46, and there (in note 40) the discussion and references to earlier bibliography.

(1 Kgs 3:1; 7:8) and no fewer than “300” others (1 Kgs 11:1–4).¹² The only passage in the Hebrew Bible that seems to provide an account of Solomon’s wedding (and, perhaps, his coronation) is Song of Songs 3:6–11, but this poetic text cannot be relied upon for historiographical reconstruction. It calls on the “daughters of Zion” to look “at King Solomon, at the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, on the day of the gladness of his heart” (צאינה וראינה בנות ציון במלך שלמה בעטרה שעטרה־לו אמו ביום חתנתו וביום שמחתו לבר) Song 3:11). The origin of this passage is disputed.¹³ Nonetheless, though this reference to Solomon’s “crown”¹⁴ might seem to imply that his coronation occurred on his wedding day, this is not certain. As Roland E. Murphy states: “This can be either a royal crown or some kind of wedding garland (cf. Isa 61:10). Nothing is known about any practice in which the queen mother would have crowned her son, whether at his coronation or on his wedding day. Hence there is no direct evidence to identify the crown as royal or not. Neither can one eliminate the possibility that this detail may be only a poetic flourish.”¹⁵

That the text is (primarily) concerned with Solomon’s wedding, rather than his coronation is supported by Song of Songs 3:7–10: While in 1 Kings 10:18–20 (// 2 Chr 9:17–19) we have a description of the marvelous *throne* of Solomon, the love poetry in the Song of Songs chooses to describe Solomon’s *bed*, “its interior inlaid with love by the

¹² On this issue, see [Chapter Four](#), §IV.

¹³ See for example, M. H. Pope, *Song of Songs: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 7C (Garden City: Doubleday, 1977), pp. 428–431; R. E. Murphy, *The Song of Songs*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), pp. 151–152; Y. Zakovitch, *Das Hohelied*, trans. D. Mach, Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2004), pp. 173–174; J. C. Exum, *Song of Songs*, Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), pp. 140–145.

¹⁴ There are only a few references to the crown of an Israelite or Judean king in the Hebrew Bible, most of which use language other than that in Song 3:11. In particular, the verb עטַר in Song 3:11 does not occur elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible in reference to coronation (but see the reference to crowning [עַטַּן] a groom in Isa 61:10). The noun עטרה also used in Song 3:11 only occurs once in Samuel-Kings (paralleled in Chronicles), in reference to the crown David took from “Milcom” (עֶשֶׂת־מִלְכָּם) and placed on his head after the defeat of the Ammonites (2 Sam 12:30 // 1 Chr 20:2). The only other reference to an Israelite or Judean king who had a “crown” (נוֹר) placed on his head was Joash (2 Kgs 11:12 // 2 Chr 23:11); though the practice may have been more widespread (cf. 2 Sam 1:10; Ps 89:40 [ET, 89:39]; 132:17–18; in all these cases the term for “crown” is נֹר, not עטרה). Both עטרה and נֹר are attested in both early and late biblical literature, in diverse contexts.

¹⁵ Murphy, *The Song of Songs*, p. 152.

daughters of Jerusalem" (תוכו רצוף אהבה מבנות ירושלם, Song 3:10), which is accompanied by "sixty mighty men of Israel" (Song 3:7).¹⁶

However, it is best not to carry such comparisons too far, as Song of Songs 3:6–11 is not historiography like Kings, but rather a poetic text. As J. Cheryl Exum concludes, "this is not a description of any 'real' procession but rather the product of a fruitful poetic imagination."¹⁷ So, it would be hard to see Song of Songs 3:6–11 as a description of Solomon's coronation contrasting to that portrayed in 1 Kings 1:38–40 (as well as that in 2 Chr 29:20–25), and even its value as a description of Solomon's wedding is questionable. Still, both 1 Kings 1–2 and Song of Songs 3:11 do refer to Solomon's mother supporting her adult son, though in different roles. Meanwhile Chronicles omits any role at all for Bathsheba.

III. CONCLUSION

Seemingly, Solomon's time from his birth to his rise to kingship was not exceptional, or in any case the biblical authors either did not have any source for it, or did not find it necessary to describe it, because it had no importance for the continuity of the narrative. Solomon does not appear to have been politically involved, and the Succession Narrative stresses that he undertook no action of his own to replace his father as king. He probably married when still a teenager, which is also not abnormal for the biblical period, and fathered his oldest son Rehoboam before securing the throne. There is no solid evidence for some scholars' assumption that David committed Solomon to the charge of Nathan the prophet, that the latter was appointed guardian or tutor of Solomon, or that he was responsible for the education of the child. We do not have any firm biblical or extrabiblical information about these issues.

¹⁶ It also describes Solomon's unique אפריין that he made for himself from gold, silver, and wood from Lebanon (Song 3:9–10). The word אפריין is a *bapax legomenon* in the Hebrew Bible. Its exact meaning is not clear (from Greek φορῆσον, or Persian *aparyān*?), however, it is usually explained as a kind of special sofa or a litter or a unique chair. Regardless of the origins of Song of Songs 3:6–11, it more likely alludes to a later marriage than that with Naamah, since Solomon is already "king" at the time imagined by the text.

¹⁷ Exum, *Song of Songs*, p. 142; cf. also Zakovitch, *Das Hohelied*, pp. 34–35.

CHAPTER 9

Solomon's Physical Appearance and Leadership in Biblical Historiography

The Succession Narrative shows a much stronger interest in the physical appearance of its characters than most biblical narratives do. It provides explicit information about the appearances of Solomon's royal predecessors and rival brothers, as well as various other members of David's family, including Saul, David, Absalom, and Adonijah, as well as Tamar, Abigail, Bathsheba, and Abishag. By contrast, it does not devote a single word to describing Solomon's appearance. Is this merely due to a lack of information to pass along, or is there any specific intention behind this omission? This chapter argues that this is part of the text's means of highlighting Solomon's unique wisdom as his defining characteristic and qualification for kingship. It suggests that the omission of any external, physical description of Solomon may serve to highlight his internal character – particularly his wisdom or piety – and his identification in the text as the rightful heir to David.

I. SOLOMON'S PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The early biblical historiography includes no description of Solomon's physical appearance at any stage of his life. Similar to the lack of any information about Solomon's childhood, this is not unusual in the biblical literature as a whole. In contrast to other ancient writers such as Homer, who provides detailed descriptions of his characters, how they looked and felt in this or that situation,¹ biblical narrators generally are very thrifty in

¹ See E. Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. W. R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), pp. 3–23, esp. pp. 10–14.

such descriptions.² In fact, except for the first two kings of the United Monarchy, Saul and David, the biblical historians do not describe the physical appearance of any of the kings of Israel or Judah.

But the stories in the book of Samuel and in 1 Kings 1–2 concerning the early monarchy are exceptional in this regard, where the physical appearances of several other figures are described, including kings and claimants to the throne. For example, in contrast to the young Solomon, of whom nothing is said, Saul is described as “a young man and handsome [בהור וטוב]; and among the people of Israel there was not a more handsome person than he; from his shoulders upwards he was higher than any of the people” (1 Sam 9:2, and in chiasitic order in 10:23c). David’s physical appearance is described three times (1 Sam 16:12; 16:18; 17:42). To cite the first one, 1 Samuel 16:12, he was “red haired, with beautiful eyes, and good looking” (אדמוני עם יפה עינים וטוב ראי; cf. 17:42, “red haired and good looking [יפה מראה]”). Moreover, the biblical narrator recounts that David’s wives, Abigail (1 Sam 25:1) and Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:2) were “beautiful,” as was his daughter, Tamar (2 Sam 13:1). About Solomon’s half-brother Absalom it is said: “In all Israel there was none so much praised as Absalom for his beauty; from the sole of his foot to the top of his head there was no blemish on him. And when he shaved his head, for it was at every year’s end that he shaved it; because the hair was heavy on him, it was 200 shekels [ca. five pounds] by the king’s weight” (2 Sam 14:25–26). Finally, in 1 Kings 1:4, the maid of David, Abishag the Shunammite, is described as “exceedingly beautiful,” and Adonijah “also was a very handsome man” (1:6).

In other words, while physical description is rare elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, the descriptions of Saul and David prior to their accessions, and of Absalom and Adonijah in the Succession Narrative, are exceptions, leaving the omission of such a description of Solomon surprising: Why were these described, but not Solomon?

In most cases the descriptions of Solomon’s predecessors serve as expositions for what will be told about them later on. Accordingly, Saul’s handsomeness is mentioned in 1 Samuel 9:2 as background for the chattering of the young girls with him at the well (1 Sam 9:11–13). It is also likely that this is meant as background to the story in 1 Samuel 10, where Saul hides with the baggage, maybe because he was too tall to

² Cf. S. Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 70 (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989), pp. 48–53; R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), pp. 114–130.

blend into the crowd (1 Sam 10:23c). It was the beauty of Bathsheba, who is described as “very good looking” (וְהָאִשָּׁה טוֹבַת מְרָאָה מְאֹד; 2 Sam 11:2b), that drew David’s attention, leading to their affair and all its consequences. Similarly, the beauty of Tamar is noted in 2 Samuel 13:1 as exposition for the love of her half-brother Amnon for her, which leads to the entire subsequent story of Absalom’s murder of Amnon (2 Sam 13:1–39). This in turn created tension with David that ended in Absalom’s failed rebellion and death (2 Sam 14–19).

The information about Absalom’s beauty is possibly background for his easy contact with the people (2 Sam 15:1–12), and his heavy hair also anticipates the story of his death recounted in 2 Samuel 18:9–15. There his hair becomes caught in an oak tree, so he is unable to defend himself and is killed by Joab.

Thus, biblical narrators typically only provide this kind of information when it is important to the continuity of the story.³ However, this is not always the reason. For instance, in the case of David, the description of his beauty is perhaps meant to explain his popularity among the people, but does not serve as background to any specific story.

Nevertheless, since David is described as a very handsome man, and Bathsheba is said to have been blessed with unique beauty (2 Sam 11:2), it is plausible that their son Solomon was also good looking, as were at least two of his half-brothers, Absalom and Adonijah, and his half-sister, Tamar. At the very least, it is surprising that Solomon is not described in this way. Why then is this not mentioned?

Maybe the answer relates to the fact that good looks appear to be among the expected characteristics of a potential king. This is reflected in the fact that it is affirmed of all four of Solomon’s predecessors: Saul and David, who were kings, as well as Absalom and Adonijah, who claimed the royal throne – each was described as very handsome just before he became, or sought to become, king. Further, when Samuel was sent to anoint one of Jesse’s sons as a new king instead of Saul, he looked first at Jesse’s oldest son, Eliab, who was evidently tall and attractive, and

³ Similarly, the physical description of Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, who was “lame in his feet” (2 Sam 9:3; see also 9:13), is an exposition for the story in 2 Sam 16:1–4. See also the descriptions of the child Esau, who “came out red, all over like a hairy garment” (וְאֶדְמוֹנִי בָּלוּ קַאֲדָרֶת שֶׁעַר; Gen 25:25, cf. 27:11b), and Jacob, who is described as “a smooth man” (Gen 27:11c), which are exposition for the story regarding Isaac’s blessing of them in Gen 27:1–40. In addition, the description וְאֶדְמוֹנִי בָּלוּ קַאֲדָרֶת שֶׁעַר (Gen 25:25) is also background to the folkloristic explanation for the names אֶדְוִם (Edom) and שֵׁעִיר (Seir; cf. Gen 36:8).

was immediately convinced that he was the chosen king, declaring: *אך נגד יהוה משיחו*, “Surely the Lord’s anointed is before him” (1 Sam 16:6). In other words, even the prophet Samuel judges Eliab to be a suitable king based solely on his appearance (perhaps because Eliab reminded him of Saul, who was also handsome and tall; 1 Sam 9:2; 10:23–24)! However, the Lord rejects this criterion absolutely (1 Sam 16:7):

ויאמר יהוה אל שמואל
אל תבט אל מראהו ואל גבה קומתו
כי מאסתיהו כי לא אשר יראה האדם,
כי האדם יראה לעינים ויהוה יראה ללבב.⁴

And the Lord said to Samuel:

Do not look on his appearance or on his height of stature,
because I have refused him; the Lord does not see as mortals see;
they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.⁵

In that light, the omission of any description of Solomon’s physical appearance may imply that his qualifications to be king do not rest on physical beauty (unlike Eliab, Absalom, and Adonijah). Instead, they rest on his internal character as a wise leader, which could supply another explanation why “the Lord loved him,” that is, chose him, and called him “Yedidyah” (2 Sam 12:24–25).⁶ The Lord saw him from another angle, not a physical one, focused on Solomon’s wisdom and ability to provide qualitative leadership to Israel. Thus, the absence of any description of Solomon’s physical appearance could serve as background for the emphasis on Solomon’s wisdom and leadership.

⁴ Notice the chiasmic order of the phrases:

כי לא אשר יראה האדם
כי האדם יראה לעינים

⁵ To paraphrase Job’s rhetorical question, *אם כראות אנוש תראה*, (“Do you have eyes of flesh / Do you see as humans see?” Job 10:4), which expresses the same notion: God does not have eyes of flesh, and he observes differently than do human beings. In contrast to the excited reaction of Samuel to the beauty of Eliab, the *Wisdom of Ben Sira* 11:2 (MS A, IV r.; cf. MS B, I r.) stresses: *במראהו* [מכ] [ער] בתעב אדם ואל תתעב אדם במראהו, “Do not praise a man for his looks, and do not abhor a man for the ugliness in his appearance.” See Segal, *The Complete Book of Ben Sira*, p. 65; Beentjes, *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew*, pp. 36, 50. The line is preserved as cited in the text in Manuscript A (IV r.), while in manuscript B (I r.) it is slightly different and the final word is damaged: *א.ל תהלל אדם בתארו / ואל תתעב אדם מעוב ב.ל. . .*]. Note, the words *במראהו* and *בתארו* create a literary metathesis; see I. Kalimi, *Metatheses in the Hebrew Bible: Wordplay as a Literary and Exegetical Device* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2018), chapter 6, no. 5.

⁶ On this issue see the detailed discussion, [Chapters Five](#) and [Six](#).

Indeed, Solomon's qualifications are emphasized already in the description of Lord's first revelation to him in Gibeon. When the Lord offers to bless him, Solomon asks not for long life, wealth, or military victory over his enemies, but for the wisdom to lead the people of Israel: "Give therefore your servant *an understanding heart to judge your people*, that I may discern between good and bad," and indeed, "this pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing" (1 Kgs 3:5-14, esp. 9-10).

Solomon's legendary wisdom became his most characteristic feature, and is stressed several times in Kings. It is clearly expressed in the description of his numerous compositions and great knowledge, which caused people from "all nations" to come hear the wisdom of Solomon (1 Kgs 5:9-14, cf. 5:21, 26 [ET, 4:29-34; 5:7, 12]). The notion that wisdom is Solomon's defining characteristic is also exemplified in the story of the two harlots (1 Kgs 3:16-28), as well as in the story of the Queen of Sheba (1 Kgs 10:1-13), who came from the ends of the earth to hear Solomon's *wisdom*, not to see his physical charms. Besides his intellectual qualities, there is also no description of Solomon's mental or emotional character. Nevertheless, even according to the book of Kings, Solomon transgressed and failed *despite* his great wisdom (1 Kgs 11).

Meanwhile the description of Adonijah as handsome (1 Kgs 1:6) corresponds to the portrayal that he is the expected choice for king (since Saul, David, and Absalom were all handsome). The fact that this is directly followed by a reminder that he was next in line after Absalom *might* also be meant to cast doubt upon Adonijah's character, suggesting that his claim to kingship, like Absalom's, is not legitimate in the narrator's eyes, though in reality it probably was. By contrast, the lack of such a physical description of Solomon could also be part of the general downplaying of Solomon's own role in the succession. That is, though Solomon himself may well have been attractive and handsome, like some of the other members of his family, this was not a reason for his accession to the throne.

Now, although the Chronicler follows Samuel-Kings in giving no information about Solomon's appearance, he takes a different position regarding his wisdom, moderating it by omitting the story of the two harlots in 1 Kings 3:16-28, and the statement that "God gave wisdom to Solomon" in 1 Kings 5:26 [ET, 5:12]. For the Chronicler, Solomon's preeminent characteristic is not his physical appearance or his wisdom, but rather his being God's chosen king and Temple builder, who is marked by obedience and loyalty to the Lord. It seems that also the Chronicler did not consider wisdom to guarantee the success of a king.

II. IS SONG OF SONGS 5:10-16 A DESCRIPTION OF SOLOMON'S PHYSICAL APPEARANCE?

While neither Samuel-Kings nor Chronicles provides any physical description of Solomon, one passage in the Hebrew Bible has sometimes been interpreted in that way: the metaphorical description of the male lover in Song of Songs 5:10-16. Since the superscription to the book reads שיר השירים אשר לשלמה ("The Song of Songs, for/of/by/to Solomon"; 1:1), and several later verses refer to Solomon (1:5; 3:7, 9, 11; 8:11, 12), the book has traditionally been understood to have been written by Solomon. On that basis, the descriptions of the lovers have occasionally been read as an account of Solomon's own relationship with a certain woman ("the Shulammitte" in 7:1 (ET, 6:13), who is sometimes identified with the daughter of Pharaoh mentioned in 1 Kgs 3:1, or Abishag the Shunammite in 1 Kgs 1:4, or others). Such "literal" interpretations of the Song of Songs go back at least as early as Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428 CE), though they were condemned at the fifth ecumenical council (553 CE). Similar views were also expressed in a couple of anonymous medieval rabbinic commentaries, and by the contemporary of John Calvin, Sebastian Castellio (1515-1563 CE).⁷ If such an interpretation were accepted, then the description of the male lover in Song of Songs 5:10-16 could be read as a description of the beauty of Solomon himself, through metaphor and simile:

My beloved is all radiant and ruddy, distinguished among ten thousand. His head is the finest gold; his locks are wavy, black as a raven. His eyes are like doves beside springs of water, bathed in milk, fitly set. His cheeks are like beds of spices, yielding fragrance. His lips are lilies, distilling liquid myrrh. His arms are rounded gold, set with jewels. His body is ivory work, encrusted with sapphires. His legs are alabaster columns, set upon bases of gold. His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as the cedars. His speech is most sweet, and he is altogether desirable. This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

⁷ For a bibliography, see H. H. Rowley, "The Interpretation of the Song of Songs," *JTS* 38 (1937), pp. 337-363, esp. pp. 352-353; G. Gerleman, *Ruth, Das Hohelied*, Biblische Kommentar Altes Testament 18 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1965), pp. 45, 48-51. O. Keel, *Song of Songs: A Continental Commentary*, trans. F. J. Gaiser (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), pp. 9-11; T. Longman III, *Song of Songs*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2001), pp. 38-41.

However, even most scholars who have identified Solomon as the author have not read this passage as a description of Solomon himself,⁸ nor do all those who identify the lover with Solomon see him as the author.⁹ Nevertheless, the view that the song is meant to describe Solomon and one of his lovers has been defended by several scholars.¹⁰ Is this plausible?

Aside from the fact that Song of Songs 5 is largely metaphorical rather than literal, most recent commentators have doubted both the traditional identification of Solomon as the author, as well as the idea that the lover is meant to refer to him.¹¹ Indeed, many deny that the book tells a unified story at all, seeing it instead as a collection of originally independent love poetry.¹² Further, since Song of Songs 5:10–16 itself does not explicitly mention Solomon, any such connection has to be based on the references to Solomon elsewhere in the book, such as in Song of Songs 3:6–11. This issue is complicated, therefore, not only due to the difficulties surrounding the interpretation of 3:6–11, as we have seen, but also because the relations between particular parts of the book are uncertain. So while it is plausible that Song of Songs 3:6–11 describes Solomon's wedding, it is

⁸ For instance, cf. recently, D. Garrett, *Song of Songs*, Word Biblical Commentary 23b (Nashville, Thomas Nelson, 2004), pp. 22–25. Though he accepts that the Song was written in Solomon's court, if not by Solomon himself, he considers attempts to identify the characters with Solomon and a particular woman "mere guesswork." Gerleman, *Ruth, Das Hohelied*, pp. 75–77, dates the book to the early monarchy, but makes no attempt to link it or its descriptions to Solomon (compare pp. 171–178).

⁹ For instance, V. Sasson, "King Solomon and the Dark Lady in the Song of Songs," VT 39 (1989), pp. 407–414.

¹⁰ Such as O. Zöckler, *The Song of Solomon*, trans. W. H. Green (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1870), pp. 2, 11–12, 105; F. Delitzsch, *Biblischer Commentar über die Poetischen Bücher des Alten Testaments, Vierter Band: Hoheslied und Koeleth* (Leipzig: Dörffling und Franke, 1875), pp. 5–7; W. Volck and S. Oetli, *Die poetischen Hagiographen (Buch Hiob, Prediger Salomo, Hohelied und Klagelieder)*, Kurzgefasster Kommentar zu den heiligen Schriften Alten und Neuen Testaments sowie zu den Apokryphen 7 (Nördlingen, C. H. Beck, 1889), pp. 15–171; A. Miller, *Das Hohe Lied*, Die Heilige Schrift des Alten Testaments 6, 3 (Bonn: P. Hanstein, 1927), p. 56, who sees Solomonic authorship as a "literary fiction" (*ibid.*, 18); H. H. Rowley, "The Meaning of the Shulammitte," *AJSL* 59 (1939), pp. 84–91; Sasson, "King Solomon and the Dark Lady in the Song of Songs," pp. 407–414.

¹¹ E.g., Murphy, *The Song of Songs*, pp. 3–7, 120–122; Zakovitch, *Das Hohelied*, pp. 41–43; Exum, *Song of Songs*, pp. 89–91; idem, "Song of Solomon," in M. D. Coogan, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Books of the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), vol. 2, pp. 335–339.

¹² E.g., Gerleman, *Ruth, Das Hohelied*, pp. 50, 59–62, calls it "a loose collection of uncoordinated songs" ("eine lose Sammlung unzusammenhängender Lieder"; p. 59); similarly, Zakovitch, *Das Hohelied*, p. 30. This is rejected by, e.g., Exum, *Song of Songs*, pp. 33–37.

impossible to straightforwardly infer from this that 5:10–16 also describes Solomon. For example, Exum thinks the male lover in the Song of Songs as a whole is not Solomon, but is simply described *as though* he were Solomon in 3:6–11.¹³

Nonetheless, even if Song of Songs 5:10–16, or any other text in the Song of Songs, describes the physical appearance of Solomon – which I think unlikely – it would only confirm the reasonable assumption that Solomon was a good-looking man, but still would not provide any more information in conventional language about how he really looked, than what we have about his father, mother, and other members of Davidic family. Moreover, once again, the descriptions of the Song of Songs are poetic, unlike the biblical historiographical texts in Samuel-Kings. No matter their date or referent, therefore, the accounts in the Song of Songs should never be given the same weight in historical analysis as the historiographical texts of the Hebrew Bible, where no visual description of Solomon appears, and instead his wisdom and leadership are emphasized.

III. CONCLUSION

There is no solid evidence about the physical or visual appearance of Solomon. It is plausible that he was good-looking like his parents David and Bathsheba, and like at least as some of his half-brothers and half-sisters (i.e., Absalom, Adonijah, and Tamar), but no historiographical text from ancient Israel affirms this. The omission of any description of Solomon's physical appearance by the biblical authors perhaps implies that his credentials to be king do not depend on his physical beauty (in contrast to Eliab, Absalom, and Adonijah). Instead, they depend on his internal qualities as a leader. Solomon's qualifications are highlighted already in the Lord's first revelation to him in Gibeon, when Solomon asked for "an understanding heart to judge your people" (1 Kgs 3:5–14). Solomon's legendary wisdom is stressed several times by the writer of 1 Kings 3–10 (1 Kgs 5:9–14, 21, 26 [ET, 4:29–34; 5:7, 12]), and this, rather than his physical stature, became his defining characteristic. However, even this is much reduced in Chronicles, where the focus is on the king's righteousness and obedience to the Lord.

¹³ Exum, *Song of Songs*, pp. 140–141.

The descriptions of the Song of Songs – particularly Song of Songs 5:10–16 – cannot necessarily be taken to refer to the physical appearance of King Solomon (despite 3:6–11), but in any case such poetic descriptions can by no means be read as straightforwardly literal or historiographical, as the texts dedicated to Solomon in Samuel-Kings might be read.

CHAPTER 10

Solomon's Succession to the Throne

History and Contrasting Historiographies

I. INTRODUCTION

The books of Kings and Chronicles present sharply contrasting portrayals of Solomon's succession to the throne of David, even contradicting one another at several key points. While in 1 Kings 1–2, Solomon attains the throne as a result of political court intrigues, and consolidates his power through the elimination of a number of his potential rivals, in Chronicles he is coroneted without any controversy, is embraced by all his brothers, David's officials, and all Israel, and takes power with no violence at all. Yet despite these significant differences, both accounts strive to achieve essentially the same goal: to legitimate Solomon as the divinely chosen successor to David as king of Israel. How they do this can only be fully appreciated though carefully comparing each account with the other, and with what can be reconstructed about the historical events that lie behind them.

As already noted in [Chapter Two](#), however, the only surviving written sources for reconstructing events during the United Monarchy are the biblical texts, particularly the early Israelite historiography in Samuel-Kings. These should therefore be very carefully scrutinized in order to distinguish their apologetic elements from the historical information they may contain.

Accordingly, this chapter has three parts: First, it suggests a reconstruction of the historical situation at the end of David's reign, primarily on the basis of Samuel-Kings; second, it analyzes how 1 Kings 1 (as part of David's Throne Succession Narrative) portrays this situation, to show that it represents a unified attempt to justify Solomon's right

to the throne; third, it compares this with the Chronicler's very different means of legitimizing Solomon's succession. This chapter focuses on the events leading to Solomon's ascension to the throne, while the next one addresses Solomon's coronation and his first actions after taking power.

II. SOLOMON'S SUCCESSION IN HISTORY

1. *The Last Days of King David: Personal and Political Crisis*

In 1 Kings 1:1–4, the narrator notifies his potential audience of the factual setting behind the story that he is going to narrate, and thus enables them to evaluate it on their own. The narrator indicates that the physical and spiritual conditions of King David were very unfortunate as he approached the end of his life.¹ The king was around seventy² – quite old for that time;³ in fact this would make him the oldest king in Judah's history.⁴ David was sick and weak, confined to his bed, and isolated from the surrounding world. Although he was covered with several blankets (בגדים),⁵ he was unable to keep his body warm.⁶ David's

¹ Some scholars deny that this description of David was originally connected to the following story in 1 Kgs 1:5–53, connecting it instead to 2:13–25; this is not well founded, see the discussion at the end of this sub-section.

² 2 Sam 5:4–5 and 1 Kgs 2:11 report that David became king when he was thirty years old and reigned forty years. Thus, he was around seventy years old when he died; cf. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 7.389; David Kimchi on 1 Kgs 1:1; E. Würthwein, *Das Erste Buch der Könige: Kapitel 1–16 – übersetzt und erklärt*, Das Alte Testament Deutsch (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), p. 9, and the story under review took place shortly before David's death. Regarding the number “forty” as a typological number as well as occasionally an accurate historical reference that perhaps reflects reliable information, see Chapter Two, §III, 1, note 53.

³ Note that the narrator describes David in this way: “King David was *old* and advanced in years” (1 Kgs 1:1a), while Barzillai is said to be: “a *very old* man, eighty years old” (2 Sam 19:33 [ET, 19:32]). Thus, this biblical author appears to refer to the one in his seventies as “old,” and the one in his eighties as “very old.”

⁴ See the table of the ages of the kings of Judah by Ishida, *The Royal Dynasties in Ancient Israel*, pp. 153–154.

⁵ The word בגדים in this context does not mean simply “clothes” (*Kleider*), as it is translated by many scholars (e.g., King James Version, Revised Standard Version, New English Bible; *Lutherbibel*), but rather “blankets” (*Decken*) used as a bed cover.

⁶ Several suggestions have been made regarding David's illness. For example, the Babylonian Talmud, *Berachot* 62b, gave an ethical explanation: David was punished for his misbehavior in cutting the edge of Saul's garment (1 Sam 24:5): “Rabbi Jose ben Rabbi Haninah said: Whoever treats garments contemptuously will in the end derive no benefit from them; for it says, ‘Now King David was old and stricken in years; and they covered

officials (or “physicians,” as Josephus describes them, *Jewish Antiquities* 7.343)⁷ advised him to have “a young virgin” brought to nurse him and sleep with him in order to keep his body warm (1:2).⁸ However, unlike David’s former self, who according to Samuel had at least seventeen children (2 Sam 3:2–5; 5:14; 1 Chr 3:1–9 lists nineteen children),⁹ he was not aroused even by the most beautiful young virgin in Israel – Abishag the Shunammite.¹⁰ The detailed description of the king’s condition and Abishag’s beauty and task (1 Kgs 1:1–4b) ends with a brief anticlimactic phrase: והמלך לא ידעה (“but the king did not know her

him with blankets, but he could get no heat.” This interpretation is adopted by the medieval Jewish exegetes Rashi and David Kimchi in their commentaries on 1 Kgs 1:1. They also cite a Midrash that in their opinion is “closer” to the simple meaning of Scripture. The latter relates David’s cold body to the story in 2 Sam 24:17 (// 1 Chr 21:17): when David saw the angel with the sword in his hand, he was afraid and his blood grew cold. Kimchi also adds that the many wars that David waged caused him to get old and weak earlier than normal, “and the old person the older he gets so his blood got colder and colder during the time.” Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities* 7.343) also gave a physical reason: David’s old age caused his illness. Nonetheless, some modern physicians go beyond this and attempt to diagnose the exact medical problem that caused David’s sickness. Liubov (Louba) Ben-Noun of the Soroka University Medical Center of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (Beer Sheva, Israel), is of the opinion that 1 Kgs 1:1 indicates that David was afflicted with hypothermia. “Among various diseases, the most likely to cause immobility and subsequent hypothermia are dementia, senile osteoporosis, hyperparathyroidism, or malignancy. Among these diseases, malignancy is the most acceptable”; see L. Ben-Noun, “Was the Biblical King David Affected by Hypothermia?” *Journal of Gerontology* 57 (2002), pp. 364–367, esp. p. 364. In another article, “Mental Disorder that Afflicted King David the Great,” *History of Psychiatry* 15 (2004), pp. 467–476, Ben-Noun concludes: “Evaluation of the passages referring to King David indicates that he was afflicted by some mental disorder, and among the many possibilities, major depression, dysthymia and minor depression are the most likely. Of these diagnoses, major depression seems the most acceptable” (*ibid.*, p. 467).

⁷ However, the word עבדיו in this context does not mean “his slaves” or “gentlemen of the bedchamber” (so, for instance, J. A. Montgomery and H. S. Gehman, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Kings*, International Critical Commentary [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1951], p. 71), who definitely were not allowed to advise the king on anything, or even capable of doing so.

⁸ This is a good example of what the author meant in citing Samuel’s warning about the king’s absolute power: “And he will take your daughters to be,” in fact, whatever he wants! (1 Sam 8:13).

⁹ See Chapter Seven, §II.

¹⁰ The Syriac (Peshitta) and Arabic translations identify “Abishag the Shunammite” with the “Shulamite” mentioned in Song 7:1 (ET: 6:13), and write “Abishag the Shulamite.” However, the word “Shunammite” indicates Abishag’s hometown Shunem, which is located in the territory of Issachar in the eastern plain of Jezreel (Jos 19:18, see also 1 Sam 28:4; 2 Kgs 4:8). Similarly, “the great lady” from Shunem (2 Kgs 4:8) was called “the Shunammite” (4:12, 25, 36). For a survey of earlier discussions of this name, see Montgomery and Gehman, *The Books of Kings*, pp. 81–82; Mulder, *1 Kings 1–11*, pp. 35–36.

[sexually],” 1:4c).¹¹ In fact, the very emphasis on the beauty of Abishag is meant to show the absolute impotence of King David. Thus, of the double task for which Abishag was brought to the king: ותהי לו סכנת ושכבה בחיקך (“let her be his attendant [or caretaker], let her lie in your bosom”; 1:2d–e), she fulfilled only the first and less important one, ותהי למלך סכנת ותשרתו (“she became the king’s attendant and nursed him”; 1:4b).¹² The major purpose for bringing Abishag – ושכבה בחיקך – could not be fulfilled, because the king had become so weak. A sufficient number of servants could have served/nursed the king, but apparently no one was in a position to intimately warm his cold body.

Some scholars have denied that this account of David’s situation is original to 1 Kings 1, but this overlooks the fact that the information provided in 1:1–4 is the necessary basis for the entire subsequent story of the intrigue of Nathan and Bathsheba, which led to the succession of Solomon to the throne (1 Kgs 1:5–53). This exposition does not serve 1 Kings 2:13–25 only, where Adonijah requests to have Abishag as a wife, as some scholars assume.¹³ For example, Martin Noth separated 1 Kings 1:1a from 1:1b–4 and considered the latter to be an original part of the story in 2:13–25.¹⁴ Similarly, Saul Zalewski argued that 1 Kings 1:1–4 does not relate to the subsequent story in 1 Kings 1:5–8.¹⁵ However, David’s poor physical and spiritual condition is necessary to understand many aspects of the following story, including how he could be taken in by the intrigue.

¹¹ For the biblical term ידע “to know (a woman),” cf. Gen 4:1; 24:16; 38:26.

¹² Cf. 1 Kgs 1:15c. It seems that ותשרתו interprets the phrase סכנת למלך. However, 1:15b + c is not an “unnecessary repetition” of 1:1–4, and therefore also not a later expansion as suggested by some commentators, for example, Klostermann, *Die Bücher Samuelis und der Könige*, p. 264; Greßmann, *Die älteste Geschichtsschreibung und Prophetie Israels*, p. 188. Rather, it is a brief retrospective recalling David’s situation as detailed earlier; cf. Würthwein, *Das Erste Buch der Könige*, p. 14; S. J. DeVries, *1 Kings*, Word Biblical Commentary 12 (Waco: Word, 1985), p. 11. In my opinion, the interpretation of David Kimchi (which was preferred by Cogan, *1 Kings*, pp. 159–160) is unacceptable, that this verse tells how “Bathsheba entered the chamber, even though the king was intimately in bed with Abishag, and no one was allowed to enter without permission, except her, for she was his wife.” Nathan entered the same chamber as “she was still talking with the king” (1:23), and he is immediately followed by Zadok and Benaiah (1:32). It is quite inconceivable that these officials entered the chamber “though the king was intimately in bed with Abishag.”

¹³ See, for example, Montgomery and Gehman, *The Books of Kings*, p. 71; M. Noth, *Könige*, Biblische Kommentar Altes Testament 9/1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1968), pp. 13–14; Würthwein, *Das Erste Buch der Könige*, p. 10.

¹⁴ See Noth, *Könige*, pp. 13–14.

¹⁵ See Zalewski, *Solomon’s Ascension to the Throne*, p. 44. Cf. also Gray, *I & II Kings*, p. 76: “It [i.e., 1:1–4] may, like 2:13ff., be a secondary elaboration of the Story of the Davidic Succession.”

Thus, it is recounted in the rest of 1 Kings 1 that the king's bedroom was converted into a chamber where he met not only his beloved wife, Bathsheba (1:15–16, 28–31), but also his religious, military, and civil officials (1:22–23, 32, 47).¹⁶ Moreover, when Bathsheba enters the bedroom, David responds to her distantly, as if she were a stranger, much as he responded to the woman of Tekoa (2 Sam 14:5). He addresses her straightforwardly: “What do you want?” (מה לך, 1 Kgs 1:16b).¹⁷ One may contrast this with the reaction of King Solomon when Bathsheba went to speak to him on behalf of Adonijah: “The king rose to meet her, and bowed down to her; then he sat on his throne, and had a throne brought for the king's mother, and she sat on his right. Then she said, ‘I have one small request to make of you; do not refuse me.’ And the king said to her, ‘Make your request, my mother; for I will not refuse you’” (1 Kgs 2:19–20). Another example, from a later literary composition, is the reaction of King Ahasuerus to Esther: “Then the king said to her: ‘What do you wish *Queen Esther* and what is your request? *It shall be given to you even to the half of the kingdom!*’” (Esth 5:3). By contrast, David's cold and abrupt response to Bathsheba confirms his poor physical and mental state.

In any sense of the words, therefore, David was not himself. He could not function even according to the basic royal protocol and seems to have been incapable of investing any reasonable thought into the successor who would lead his kingdom in the future. Only in that light is it possible to understand the following story, leading to Solomon's coronation.

2. Did Adonijah Rebel against His Father David?

A close reading of Samuel-Kings suggests the following historical conclusions:

- (1) At the end of David's reign, the political situation was not clear:
There were good reasons to presume that one of David's sons

¹⁶ Contra Veijola and Würthwein, there is no reason to consider 1 Kgs 1:46–48 as a late addition; see Würthwein, *Das Erste Buch der Könige*, p. 8 (and the reference there to Veijola).

¹⁷ There is no reason to translate לך מה in 2 Sam 14:5, “What aileth thee?” while in 1 Kgs 1:16b, “What wouldest thou?” (so in the King James Version). Similarly also in the Revised Standard Version the phrase in 1 Kgs 1:16b is translated as “What do you desire?” but in 2 Sam 14:5 as “What is your trouble?” In the *Lutherbibel*, 2 Sam 14:5 reads “Was hast du?” while 1 Kgs 1:16b has “Was willst du?” Klostermann translates “was fehlt dir?” in 2 Sam 14:5, but in 1 Kgs 1:16b, “was ist dir?”; see Klostermann, *Die Bücher Samuelis und der Könige*, pp. 191, 264. Obviously, these translators overlook the fact that the same idiom occurs in both verses.

would inherit his throne and be king over Judah (i.e., the southern tribes), but would he also reign over Israel (i.e., the northern tribes)?¹⁸ With the latter, David had a special covenant “before the Lord” to reign over them (2 Sam 5:1–3). It was, as Albrecht Alt remarked, a “personal union between the neighboring kingdoms”;¹⁹ the two kingdoms stood under the rule of one and the same king, who was accepted by both.²⁰ Note that after the death of Solomon, his son Rehoboam became king over the southern tribes (1 Kgs 11:43; 12:17). When he sought to reign over the northern tribes, the representatives of the latter did not come to him in Jerusalem; rather, he went to them in Shechem to receive their approval. However, because the new king refused to accept the tribes’ conditions, the negotiation ended unsuccessfully and caused the United Monarchy to be divided (1 Kgs 12:1–16).

- (2) According to 1 Kings 1:20, David neither trained nor appointed any of his sons to be his successor as king over Judah and Israel. Now that he had grown old, sick, weak, and isolated, he did not or could not say anything in this regard. Moreover, because of the relative novelty of the kingdom in Israel, most likely there was not even an authorized procedure for the royal succession.
- (3) A look at the ancient Israelite dynastic succession narratives shows that, as a rule, the successor to the throne was the firstborn son,²¹

¹⁸ Cf. Würthwein, *Das Erste Buch der Könige*, pp. 9–10.

¹⁹ “Personalunion zwischen Nachbarreichen”; see A. Alt, “Die Staatenbildung der Israeliten in Palästina,” in *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel* (München: C. H. Beck, 1964), vol. 2, pp. 1–65, esp. pp. 45–47.

²⁰ Another example of personal union, from the beginning of the eighth century BCE, is the case of Zkr king of Hamat and La’ash – two political entities that agreed to be ruled by one king, just as David and Solomon were kings of Israel and Judah (2 Sam 5:5; 1 Kgs 1:35); see M. Noth, “La’asch und Hazrak,” *Aufsätze zur biblischen Landes- und Altertumskunde* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1971), vol. 2, pp. 135–147, esp. p. 136. There are further examples from different times in Europe, such as the personal union of England and Scotland in 1603 when King James VI of Scotland succeeded to the throne of England, and combined English and Scottish rule under one Crown. Another well-known case is the Austro-Hungarian personal union in 1867 under Franz Joseph I of the Habsburg dynasty, who became “Emperor of Austria and Apostolic King of Hungary”; see H. W. Steed, *The Habsburg Monarchy* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), pp. 28–39, esp. p. 32.

²¹ See, for instance, 2 Chr 21:3 (an “addition”): “And their father gave them many gifts of silver and of gold and of precious things, with fortified cities in Judah; but *the kingdom he gave to Jehoram; because he was the firstborn.*” Although this information appears only in Chronicles, there is no reason to doubt its historical reliability. The custom that the firstborn son would inherit the throne is also well known from other ancient Near Eastern cultures surrounding Israel. Nevertheless, there were many exceptions; see note 23.

or the eldest surviving son of the king.²² However, if the king was still alive, his was the final decision as to who would be his successor (1:20, 27b).²³

- (4) After the deaths of Amnon, Absalom, and (presumably) Chileab (cf. 2 Sam 3:3; 13:1–30; 18:9–15),²⁴ Adonijah became the eldest surviving son of David (1 Kgs 1:6c) and therefore the legitimate crown prince and potential successor to the throne. This emerges first from Adonijah's assertion to Bathsheba: "*You know that the kingdom was mine, and that all Israel set their faces on me, that I should reign*" (1 Kgs 2:15a). This is also confirmed by Solomon's own response to her, "*And why do you ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom also; for he is my elder brother*" (2:22). Though the last part of 2:15b: *כי מיהוה היתה לו* ("for it was his from the Lord"), is part of the narrator's attempt to present Solomon as the divinely chosen, legitimate king, these verses presuppose that Adonijah was the *expected* successor.
- (5) Adonijah attempted to gain attention, while stressing his noble status. He surrounded himself with a ceremonial bodyguard: "a chariot and horsemen²⁵ and fifty out-runners"

²² See no. (4), and Ishida, *The Royal Dynasties in Ancient Israel*, pp. 152, 154–155.

²³ For this issue, see de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, pp. 100–102. For instance, Rehoboam chose Abijah as his successor despite the fact that his eldest son was Jeush (2 Chr 11:18–23, esp. verse 22, an "addition"). There is no reasonable argument to doubt the historicity of this information in Chronicles. As already stated by Kittel, "Sie scheinen aus einer alten Quelle zu stammen"; see Kittel, *Die Bücher der Chronik*, p. 126. In any case, there is no way to know if this text is based on the Chronicler's *Vorlage* as assumed by Benzinger, *Die Bücher der Chronik*, p. 97. In principle, the story in Chronicles is not exceptional. Similarly, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, did not choose his eldest son as heir to the throne, but the younger one – Esarhaddon (Aššur-aḥ-iddina), the son of his beloved Queen Naqī'a (i.e., "The Pure One," so the name is in Aramaic; in Assyrian it was rendered as Zakūtum); see H. Lewy, "Nitokris-Naḳī'a," *JNES* 11 (1952), pp. 264–286, esp. pp. 271–272. In 672 BCE, Esarhaddon made his younger son, Aššurbanipal (668–627 BCE) ruler of the Assyrian Empire, while he appointed his firstborn son, Shamash-shum-ukin, ruler of Babylonia; see E. Weidner and S. Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian Scholars to the Kings Esarhaddon and Aššurbanipal: Part I – Texts*, *Alter Orient und Altes Testament* 5/1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 1970), no. 129:3–13 (the text is on p. 102, and its translation is on p. 103).

²⁴ We do not have any information on the second son of David, Chileab. He probably died at a young age. In 1 Chr 3:1 he was named "Daniel"; see Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 99–107, esp. p. 107.

²⁵ In 1 Kgs 1:5 this is *רכב ופרשים* (cf. 1 Kgs 9:19; 10:26), while in 2 Sam 15:1 Absalom surrounded himself with: *מרכבה וסוטים* (cf. 1 Kgs 5:6 [ET, 4:26]; 10:28–29). Both sets also appear elsewhere in accounts of Solomon's reign. In fact, they are synonymous and refer

(1 Kgs 1:5b).²⁶ This act in itself was harmless, therefore David did not rebuke him (1 Kgs 1:6a). By doing so, Adonijah acted similarly to his late elder brother, Absalom (2 Sam 15:1), who also apparently was not rebuked by his father, because there was nothing wrong with such an action.²⁷ Nevertheless, since Absalom went on to rebel against David, does this allusion imply that Adonijah did as well?²⁸ That the narrator intends to suggest such a thing cannot be completely ruled out, but the story as a whole does not support that conclusion: Despite the ceremonial and physical similarities between these two brothers (1:5b, 6b),²⁹ in reality, the comparison suggests more contrasts than commonalities. The text explicitly states that “His father had never constrained (or, rebuked) him [i.e., Adonijah] by saying ‘Why have you done thus and so?’” (1 Kgs 1:6a). Nor did Adonijah rebel against his father by acting in this way, as did Absalom (2 Sam 15:7–13).³⁰

to the same things (see, e.g., Exod 14:9, 17–18, 23, 25, 28; 15:4, 19; Ezek 26:7). Thus, there is no need to “correct” the text of 1 Kgs 1:5 according to the text in 2 Sam 15:1, as suggested by Klostermann, *Die Bücher Samuelis und der Könige*, p. 263, and accepted by I. Benzinger, *Die Bücher der Könige: Erklärt*, Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament 9 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [P. Siebeck], 1899), pp. 2–3; and see also Cogan, *1 Kings*, p. 157.

²⁶ See also 1 Sam 8:11, and compare to הרצים (“the out-runners”) in 1 Sam 22:17; 1 Kgs 14:27–28 and 2 Kgs 10:25; 11:4, 6, 11; see also verse 19: שער הרצים (“the gate of the out-runners”). Interestingly, Elijah honored the king of Israel and “ran before Ahab” (1 Kgs 18:46). Barrakab, the son of Panamu, king of Sam’al, testifies (730 BCE): “I have been running at the wheel of my lord, the king of Assyria [i.e., Tiglath-pileser III],” see F. Rosenthal, “Barrakab of Y’DY-SAM’AL,” in J. B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (ANET), 3rd ed. with suppl. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 655a. As correctly noted by Cogan (1 Kings, p. 157): “Running by or in front of the king’s chariot signified honor and obeisance to one’s overlord.”

²⁷ Though 2 Sam 15:6 does describe Absalom’s actions as ויגנב אבשלום את־לב אנשי־ישראל (“And Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel”), at the beginning of the account of Absalom’s rebellion, this appears to apply to his sitting at the gate to take the king’s role in settling disputes (2 Sam 15:2–5), not his having a chariot and out-runners (2 Sam 15:1). It might have been a different matter if Absalom (or Adonijah) had ridden the king’s mule without permission (cf. 1 Kgs 1:38), but he did not.

²⁸ See, for instance, Ishida, *History and Historical Writing in Ancient Israel*, pp. 115–116, esp. p. 116: “the Solomonic historiographer” wanted to “mislead the reader with the false idea that Adonijah not only had followed in the footsteps of Absalom but also had made the decisive step toward a rebellion by gathering a military force.”

²⁹ Compare, respectively, with 2 Sam 14:25 and 15:1.

³⁰ Contra Ishida (*History and Historical Writing in Ancient Israel*, p. 117), who assumes that “the portrayal of Adonijah in 1 Kgs 1:5–6 was made from the consistently inimical viewpoint of the party opposing Adonijah.”

- (6) Even if the specific mention of Absalom in 1 Kings 1:6 could be taken to imply that the narrator does not consider Adonijah's claim to kingship to be legitimate, in reality it probably was. Adonijah lobbied with all his brothers (except Solomon), with the high officials of the kingdom, particularly Joab, the chief commander of the army, and with the well-known priest, Abiathar, and gained their support (1 Kgs 1:7, 9). Again, by acting in this way Adonijah did not conduct any illegal deed – he did not rebel against his father as did Absalom (2 Sam 15:2–18:17). The narrator alludes to this by stating: “Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, *I will be king*” (וַאֲדוֹנִיָּה בֶן-חַגִּית מִתְנַשֵּׂא לֵאמֹר אֲנִי מֶלֶךְ (1 Kgs 1:5a). Adonijah's declaration refers to the future, to the time after the death of father, David. He did not say: “I am king,” in his father's lifetime, as did Absalom: “Absalom *is king* at Hebron!” (מֶלֶךְ אֲבִשְׁלֹם בְּחֶבְרוֹן (2 Sam 15:10). Although Nathan represents this as אֲדוֹנִיָּה בֶן-חַגִּית (“Adonijah son of Haggith *is king*”; 1 Kgs 1:11), this is not actually what was said at Adonijah's banquet. They did not blow the shofar and cry “Long live King Adonijah!” as was the case later, regarding Solomon and Joash (1 Kgs 1:39; 2 Kgs 11:12). Nor are there any other indications in the Succession Narrative that Adonijah was announced as king at the banquet in Ein Rogel (1 Kgs 1:9–10).³¹ Most likely it was an assembly of Adonijah's close supporters and all the officials of Judah (כָּל אֲנָשֵׁי יְהוּדָה עֲבָדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ (1:9c), in order to represent commonality among them and to show solidarity to the crown prince.³² Under these circumstances and with the massive support of his brothers, the officials of the kingdom – including the key figures and the people, Adonijah had no reason to rebel. Rather, he was waiting for David, whose days were numbered, to pass away, so he would serenely inherit the throne.
- (7) After he murdered his brother Amnon, Absalom had a complicated relationship with his father (2 Sam 13:24–39). Even after his return from Geshur, the relationship was explosive, and in fact David did

³¹ Contra Zalewski, *Solomon's Ascension to the Throne*, pp. 45, 46, and references there to other scholars who held similar views.

³² Note that the narrator calls the people invited to the banquet of Adonijah קְרָאִים (“the guests,” 1 Kgs 1:41, 49). The same term appears also in 2 Sam 15:11, in the description of Absalom. However, while in the case of Absalom the קְרָאִים had no idea whatsoever that he was going to rebel against his father (הֵלֵכִים לְחֶמֶם וְלֹא יָדְעוּ כָּל דָּבָר), in the case of Adonijah everything was clear: He had already stated, “I will be king!”

not want to see him (2 Sam 14:24). He had good reason to worry about his candidacy as his father's successor, and therefore became a usurper to the throne (2 Sam 15). In contrast, as much as we know from the sources, Adonijah did not have any conflict with his father (cf. 1 Kgs 1:6). Accordingly he should not have been worried that his father would reject him as a future successor, and had no reason to rebel against David.

- (8) The easy collapse of Adonijah's party (1:49) "shows that they had made no preparation for revolt and were taken by surprise by the court intrigue of Solomon's factions. Otherwise, they would have offered armed resistance to David and Solomon."³³
- (9) According to "David's Testament," David accused Joab of killing Abner the son of Ner and Amasa the son of Jether (1 Kgs 2:5–6). However, he did not accuse Joab of supporting the "rebellious" action of Adonijah, that is, by announcing him as king in the life of his father and without his knowledge.
- (10) On the other hand, Adonijah did request to have his father's concubine (1 Kgs 2:17). This recalls one of Absalom's first acts after David fled from Jerusalem, when he slept with David's concubines (2 Sam 16:21–22; cf. also 12:11). Thus, Adonijah's request might be interpreted as an act of rebellion comparable to Absalom's, but aside from the points already noted, it must be emphasized that Adonijah only made this request *after David's death*. Though this surely implies a claim to the throne, as Solomon himself recognized (1 Kgs 2:22; cf. also 2 Sam 12:8), David was already dead, so this represents a challenge to *Solomon's* position, not to David's. In fact, Adonijah probably never intended to usurp the throne from his father; he merely opposed Solomon's claim to succeed David.
- (11) Abiathar also was not accused in David's Testament as one who supported rebellion. Instead, his loyalty to David was highlighted even by Solomon, who otherwise condemned him for his support of Adonijah: "I will not at this time put you to death, because you bore the Ark [אֲרוֹן]³⁴ of the Lord God before David my father, and because you *shared in all the affliction of my father* " (2:26).

³³ Ishida, *History and Historical Writing in Ancient Israel*, p. 118.

³⁴ Probably the word אֲרוֹן is a corruption of אֲפִיד; see in detail Klostermann, *Die Bücher Samuelis und der Könige*, p. 271; Gray, *I & II Kings*, pp. 108–109.

- (12) Since Joab and Abiathar were only removed from power *after* David's death, this implies that they retained their positions under the co-regency of David and Solomon (1 Kgs 1:48). This is highly unlikely if they had actually collaborated with Adonijah against King David.³⁵

All of this information regarding the historical situation is unavoidably based on the account in Samuel-Kings, but since the latter evidences no tendency to support Adonijah's actions (on the contrary, it appears to favor Solomon), the indications it contains that his behavior was appropriate for a crown prince should be considered highly credible. As the oldest surviving son of David and his expected successor, Adonijah appears to have responded to the frail state of the sick and elderly David by consolidating his support, in the expectation that David might soon die. There is no evidence that he rebelled, but his claim to the throne did not go unchallenged.

3. *Conspiracy in the Court: Nathan and Bathsheba Facing David*

Though the previous discussion strongly suggests that Adonijah did not rebel against his father David, the latter's poor physical and mental state seems to have kept him confined to bed, so his only knowledge of these events would have come secondhand. It appears that Nathan, who served as a court prophet for David,³⁶ took advantage of this situation to prevent Adonijah's succession to the throne by presenting him to the king as a rebel, and urging David to choose Solomon instead.

In Samuel-Kings, Nathan is portrayed as a wise man who delivered God's words to David (2 Sam 7; 12), and advised Bathsheba how to create an opportunity for placing her son Solomon on his throne (1 Kgs 1). Yet, Wolfgang Oswald denies any existence of a historical Nathan in the tenth century BCE. In his opinion, Nathan as described in 2 Samuel 7; 12 and 1 Kings 1 is a fictive literary figure who was created in the seventh and sixth centuries BCE.³⁷ However, Oswald's thesis depends on very thin literary-historical lines and raises a series of acute problems,

³⁵ Ishida, *History and Historical Writing in Ancient Israel*, p. 118.

³⁶ Interestingly, the other court prophet of David – Gad (1 Sam 22:5; 2 Sam 24:11–19; 1 Chr 21:9; 29:29; 2 Chr 29:25) – is not mentioned in the Succession Narrative.

³⁷ See Oswald, *Nathan der Prophet*, esp. pp. 11, 236–275.

as correctly pointed out by Walter Dietrich.³⁸ Indeed, the account in 1 Kings 1–2 about the two parties struggling to succeed to David’s throne, including not only Nathan, but also Adonijah, Bathsheba, Abishag, Joab, Benaiah, Zadok, and Shimei, is more likely based on ancient informative source(s) than being an invention of the late Judahite monarchy. Also, it is not clear by whom and for what purpose these figures would have been invented, and why particularly at that time. Thus, there is no reason to doubt that Nathan was a historical figure who served under David and Solomon, as the biblical text affirms.

That being the case, since he held favor with David, Nathan presumably expected to have influence with his successor as well. However, for some reason he was unable to gain favor with Adonijah. It is unknown what exactly caused the tension between the two (and between their supporters),³⁹ but according to 1 Kings 1:8–10, 26 Nathan was not among the participants in Adonijah’s banquet. Instead, he initiated a conspiracy against Adonijah, while actively supporting Solomon for the throne.⁴⁰ In so doing, Nathan took advantage of the physical and mental conditions of David and manipulated him. He also exploited the passive personality of Bathsheba and used her as a tool,⁴¹ in order to make David reject his eldest living son – Adonijah – for the throne, and instead to

³⁸ See W. Dietrich, “Von den ersten Königen Israels: Forschung an den Samuelbüchern im neuen Jahrtausend. Zweiter Teil,” *TRu* 77 (2012), pp. 263–316, esp. p. 277; see also B. Biberger’s critical questions in his review of Oswald’s book in *BZ* 54 (2010), pp. 119–120, esp. p. 120.

³⁹ The suggestion of some scholars (e.g., G. W. Ahlström, “Der Prophet Nathan und der Tempelbau,” *VT* 11 [1961], pp. 113–127) that it was a conflict between the party of Yahwism (represented by Abiathar, as the head of Adonijah’s supporters) and the Jebusite-Canaanite religion (represented by Zadok, as the head of Solomon’s supporters), is in fact baseless, “mountains which hang on a hair.” See also Ishida, *History and Historical Writing in Ancient Israel*, pp. 111–112.

⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the claim that Nathan was Solomon’s “sponsor” who therefore took his side (so Montgomery and Gehman, *The Books of Kings*, p. 75) is unlikely. Though Nathan is said to have given the name Yedidyah to the infant Solomon in 2 Sam 12, which serves as a form of royal legitimation, this may project back to Solomon’s birth a perspective that actually developed during Solomon’s reign. It cannot be assumed that Nathan actually did give this name at birth, nor that he played any other role in Solomon’s life before the events in 1 Kgs 1 (on these issues, see [Chapter Six](#), §III, (c) and [Chapter Eight](#), §II, 1). Moreover, in their present context the name and the phrase convey a message of hope that – unlike the first, illegitimate child – the second child born to David and Bathsheba will live and that he even has the divine blessing; see [Chapter Six](#), §III, (a).

⁴¹ Bathsheba is presented in the biblical stories as one who has no “personality,” but is a passive figure: David calls her and sleeps with her, though she is married to Uriah the Hittite (2 Sam 11:3–4), but she stays silent. Following the murder of her husband, she mourns for him (that is, she performed the appropriate mourning rituals). But when

choose his younger son – Solomon.⁴² A close examination of 1 Kings 1:5–27 yields the following evidence that Nathan conspired to place Solomon on the throne:

- (1) Nathan's question to Bathsheba, "Have you not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith has become king, and our lord David does not know it?" (1:11), is inaccurate. As previously seen, Adonijah did not declare himself a king. Accordingly, both the claim of Nathan (1:11, 13, 24–25) and that of Bathsheba, which is based on Nathan's (1:18), are false. This is part of a conspiracy, taking advantage of David's miserable condition.
- (2) Nathan alerts Bathsheba that if Adonijah were to become king, her life and that of Solomon would be at risk (1:12, see also 1:21). Although the killing of rivals by a new king was not unusual in the ancient Near East,⁴³ we have no evidence that Adonijah intended to do so.⁴⁴ Adonijah did not invite Solomon to his banquet, but this could have been for many different reasons: perhaps because he did not consider the young teenager important enough, or because of the scandals that led to his birth (2 Sam 11:10–12:24). Solomon's lack of an invitation does not necessarily imply that Adonijah would slay him. Therefore, Nathan's claim is questionable and appears to have served primarily to add urgency to his appeal to Bathsheba to join his conspiracy against Adonijah.

David "sent for her and brought her into his house" and she became his wife (2 Sam 11:27), we do not hear her own thoughts on this matter, even though "what David had done was wrong in the sight of the Lord" (2 Sam 11:27). Nathan sends her to visit David, and she simply cooperates with him (1 Kgs 1:11–14). Her reaction to Adonijah's request to have Abishag as a wife, and her appeal to Solomon to fulfill it, which was in fact making a claim on the kingdom (1 Kgs 2:13–25; cf. Gen 35:22; 2 Sam 3:7–8; 12:8; 16:21–22), is just more evidence of her naïve and easily manipulated personality. Of course, one could claim that it is the narrator of the Throne Succession Narrative who describes her as a not very insightful person. However, the accumulation of cases leads to the conclusion that most likely she was a passive and naïve personality, one who was easily and often manipulated by others. For different readings of Bathsheba's character, see Nicol, "Bathsheba, a Clever Woman?" pp. 360–363; A. Bach, "Signs of the Flesh: Observations on Characterization in the Bible," *Semeia* 63 (1993), pp. 61–79, esp. pp. 70–77.

⁴² This is not an unprecedented episode of court intrigue. There are comparable cases in ancient and modern world history; see the examples collected by Montgomery and Gehman, *The Books of Kings*, pp. 74–75.

⁴³ See, for example, 1 Kgs 15:28–29a; 16:10–12; 2 Kgs 9:11–10:14.

⁴⁴ Contra Gray, *I & II Kings*, p. 96, who claims that "Adonijah . . . himself was probably prepared to mete out to his rival [i.e., Solomon] had he been successful."

- (3) Nathan and Bathsheba introduce Joab and Abiathar as supporters of a rebellion led by Adonijah. By doing so they try to horrify the old, weak, and sick David, who had already experienced the devastating rebellion of Absalom (2 Sam 15–18). They conspire to make him feel that the situation is very dangerous, and that immediate action is necessary (1:18–19).
- (4) Nathan advises Bathsheba to manipulate the old and sickly David, whose memory was no longer reliable, by saying, “Did you not, my lord, O king, swear to your maidservant, saying, ‘Assuredly Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne?’” (1:13 see also 1:17). The claim to make Solomon a king is based on David’s oath/promise. But such a promise has never been mentioned in any place. If indeed David ever made such an important promise to Bathsheba, this would most likely have left a trace in the stories of David in the book of Samuel. It would have been known at least to David’s nephew and longtime loyal chief commander, Joab (who kept David’s secret regarding Uriah), and to his friend and priest, Abiathar. The likelihood that David did not make such a promise to Bathsheba is confirmed also from Bathsheba’s words: “But you, my lord the king, *the eyes of all Israel are on you to tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him*” (1:20). These words contradict her claim in verse 1:17 regarding the promise that David made to her. If David has already sworn/promised her that Solomon will reign after him, why does no one in Israel know about it?
- (5) Nathan presents his words to Bathsheba as “advice” (עצה, 1:12a). He adds that he will help and support her: “While you still talk there with the king, I also will come in after you, and *confirm your words*” (ומלאתי את דבריו; 1:14). If there was such an oath/promise, why should he “advise” her to say so and not simply remind her of the oath/promise that she had gotten from the king?⁴⁵ And why was there a need for Nathan’s confirmation of it? Nathan should say something like: “go and remind the king,” rather than “go and say to the king.”⁴⁶ Furthermore, in meeting

⁴⁵ See A. B. Ehrlich, *Randglossen zur Hebräischen Bibel*, 7 vols. (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1908–1914), vol. 7, p. 215.

⁴⁶ See Ehrlich, *Mikrâ ki-Pheschutô*, II. *Divre Sofrim*, p. 264; cf. idem, *Randglossen zur Hebräischen Bibel*, vol. 7, p. 215.

with David, Nathan does not mention any promise that the king made to Bathsheba (1:23–27).⁴⁷

- (6) The behavior of Bathsheba and Nathan before David is unusual: Nathan's behavior is totally different from that in 2 Samuel 12, where he stood in front of David and pointed out: "You [i.e., David] are the [evil] man!" (2 Sam 12:7a). Here, however, on entering David's chamber, "he bowed before the king with his face to the ground" (1 Kgs 1:23b). As already stated by Arnold B. Ehrlich, "the prophet who stood in front of the king and spoke justice and truth in the name of the Lord is not similar [in behavior] to the prophet who spoke to his king and praised his son."⁴⁸ Indeed, Martin Noth correctly notices: "Nathan appears in the story as a conspirator who understands very well how to move in the circles of the royal court and to arrange everything in the way to achieve his desired goal."⁴⁹ Yehezkel Kaufmann's suggestion that in 2 Samuel 12 Nathan appeared in front of David as God's messenger, while in 1 Kings 1 he acted privately as one of the king's officials,⁵⁰ does not eliminate the conflicted personalities of Nathan. Also the behavior of Bathsheba, who "bowed and prostrated herself before the king" (1:16), reflects a flattering relationship between the two.

All in all, Nathan and Bathsheba succeed in making David believe that he had solemnly sworn/promised to Bathsheba that her son would be king. They heighten the alertness of the dying king, and he reacts immediately in favor of Solomon (1:28–35). Finally, the flattering words of the officer

⁴⁷ Some scholars do not question the "advice" of Nathan and assume David's promise to Bathsheba actually occurred, so, for example, Y. Kaufmann, *Mekibshunah shel Hayitzira Hamikrait* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1966), pp. 180–184; J. Robinson, *The First Book of Kings*, The Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 28 ("It is described as a solemn oath, though we might think it to have been the kind of thing that a king would say to his favourite wife"); Bright, *A History of Israel*, p. 210; Zalewski, *Solomon's Ascension to the Throne*, pp. 46–57. Some of these scholars deny David's weak spiritual condition at the end of his life, and believe that his promise to Bathsheba was given privately, even "strictly confidentially;" therefore nobody knew about it. Kaufmann (*ibid.*, esp. pp. 182–184) and Zalewski (*ibid.*, esp. pp. 54–55) even attempted to "rehabilitate" the broken dignity of Nathan.

⁴⁸ Compare Ehrlich, *Mikrâ ki-Peschutô*, II. *Divre Sofrim*, p. 265.

⁴⁹ "Nathan aber erscheint in der Erzählung als ein Intrigant, der es sehr gut versteht, sich in Kreisen des königlichen Hofes zu bewegen und alles so zu arrangieren, daß das von ihm erstrebte Ziel erreicht wird"; see Noth, *Könige*, p. 40.

⁵⁰ Kaufmann, *Mekibshunah shel Hayitzira Hamikrait*, pp. 180–184.

of the mercenary guards, who also was not invited to Adonijah's banquet (1:10, 26), and who most likely desired to replace the chief commander Joab, completes the conspiracy: "And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada reacted to the king, and said, Amen; so say the Lord God of my lord the king too. As the Lord has been with my lord the king, so may he be with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord, King David" (1:36–37, cf. 1:47). Thus, for the time being, Solomon did not succeed to the throne by force and bloodshed (this will come later, after the death of his father!), but neither did he procure it in a just and proper way. He was not elected by the people, and only secondarily claimed to have been chosen by the king or God, as will be seen. Solomon became king because of powerful party intrigues in the palace court, taking advantage of David's condition.

After Solomon's accession we do not hear any more from or about Nathan. Apparently he continued to keep his position as the court prophet. Also, his sons were given key positions by Solomon: "Azariah son of Nathan was over the governors [of the districts; על הנציבים];⁵¹ and Zabud [LXX^{Luc}: Ζαχουρ or Ζακχουρ; Peshitta: *Zbwr*]⁵² son of Nathan was an official, the King's Friend [i.e., adviser];⁵³ [כהן רעה המלך] (1 Kgs 4:5).⁵⁴ Moreover, those who supported Nathan and Solomon replaced the high positions of those that supported

⁵¹ Most likely, in the Northern Kingdom the parallel term for נציבים was שרי המדינות; see Mettinger, *Solomonic State Officials*, p. 124.

⁵² The variations of the name stems from the interchange of the Hebrew letters נ/כ and ר/ז that are graphically similar. On this phenomenon in the Hebrew language and biblical manuscripts and translations, see A. Sperber, "Hebrew Based upon Biblical Passages in Parallel Transmission," *HUCA* 14 (1939), pp. 153–249 esp. 167 (§21) and 168 (§23).

⁵³ No equivalent to the word כהן appears in the most important manuscripts of the Septuagint. Usually, it is assumed to be a late gloss (see e.g., de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, p. 128). Presumably, כהן in the context under review means an "official" or "civil servant," rather than the common meaning, "priest." It may have been added to the margin of the text to explain the uncommon title רעה המלך, which was no longer clear to the readers. Cf. Benzinger, *Die Bücher der Könige*, p. 18. Another possible – but less likely – explanation: a glossator identified the second name "Nathan" in this text with "Nathan" son of David who was a כהן (2 Sam 5:14). Accordingly, he added the word כהן here as well.

⁵⁴ Cf. Ehrlich, *Mikrâ ki-Pheschutô, II. Divre Sofrim*, p. 276; contra Würthwein, *Das Erste Buch der Könige*, p. 40, who doubts that Azariah and Zabud were brothers and both were sons of Nathan the prophet. The Chronicler mentions only one of Nathan's sons, "Zabud the son of Nathan" (1 Chr 2:36), without his official title "priest [and] the king's friend." Probably, because the priesthood has been given to Aaron and his sons, and Nathan did not belong to that clan (if the word כהן appeared in his *Vorlage*, see previous note). Nathan himself is mentioned several times in 1 Chr 17, and in 29:29.

Adonijah: Zadok replaced Abiathar, and Benaiah replaced Joab (1 Kgs 2:35). It seems therefore that in reality Solomon gained the throne through intrigue and conspiracy: The chief conspirator (Nathan) supported the young son of Bathsheba in order to guarantee his own current high position and obtain high positions for his sons. Zadok and Benaiah joined him in order to achieve better and higher positions for themselves. Bathsheba wished her son to become king and herself to become the "Queen-Mother" (הַגְּבִירָה; 1 Kgs 2:19, see also 15:13 [// 2 Chr 15:16]; 2 Kgs 10:13; 2 Kgs 24:15 ["king's mother"]) // Jer 29:2 (הַגְּבִירָה; Jer 13:18).⁵⁵

III. THE LEGITIMACY OF SOLOMON'S SUCCESSION ACCORDING TO KINGS

On the basis of the sources available to a modern historian, this is the most that can be reconstructed concerning the historical situation at the end of David's reign: that Adonijah's actions in preparing to take over the kingship, while perhaps premature, were not inherently illegitimate nor rebellious, while Nathan's actions to secure the throne for Solomon represented a clear case of political intrigue. Yet if this was more or less the historical situation, as the author of 1 Kings 1 understood it, how has that author himself evaluated and portrayed these events? What image of Solomon are we meant to gain from his account?

Some scholars have argued that 1 Kings 1–2 is a composite text, in which an older core layer has been expanded by various Deuteronomistic and post-Deuteronomistic layers from much later periods. These reconstructions are unconvincing, however, overstating the evidence for Deuteronomistic editing, and ignoring the ways that the base text already presents Solomon as the legitimate successor to David, following the failures of his three older brothers: Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah. This adheres to a common "three-four" literary pattern, in which the fourth figure is presented as the decisive one, and it is supplemented by explicit references to Solomon's divine election, added either by the author of the Succession Narrative as a whole, or soon after. For a number of reasons, this apologetic tendency of the text makes more sense as an essentially

⁵⁵ On the "Queen-Mother" in the Hebrew Bible and ancient Near Eastern cultures, see H. J. Marsman, *Women in Ugarit and Israel: The Social and Religious Position in the Context of the Ancient Near East*, Oudtestamentische Studien 49 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2003), pp. 345–370.

unified attempt to defend Solomon from the charge of illegitimacy, than as a late fictional story, and it was probably composed relatively close to the time of the actual events. Let's turn to these issues in some detail:

1. *The Literary Unity of the Succession Narrative*

The first two chapters of the book of Kings are very closely related: Solomon's succession in 1 Kings 1 was completed with the fulfillment of what is called David's Testament and the removal of his potential rivals in 1 Kings 2:1–46a. As we will see in [Chapter Twelve](#) (§V, 1), the text in 1 Kings 2 is not fully unified, and does include some relatively brief secondary (Deuteronomistic) additions, but the two chapters depend on one another, and neither can be separated from the preceding part of the Throne Succession Narrative in 2 Samuel 9–20.⁵⁶

The stories in 2 Samuel 9–20 and 1 Kings 1–2 have been widely recognized as an independent account about the family of David, which was incorporated at some point within the large complex of Samuel-Kings (or LXX: βασιλείων i.e., “Kingdoms”), while later on six appendices on David (2 Sam 21–24) were inserted in between, for whatever reason.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ By contrast, “there is nothing in [1 Kings] chapter 3 to serve as chapter 2's continuation”; see DeVries, 1 Kings, p. 29.

⁵⁷ See, for instance, Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments*, p. 259. On the location of 2 Sam 21–24 (which includes a diverse collection of poetry, lists of officers, and stories) in the current book of Samuel, see for example, Budde, *Die Bücher Samuel*, p. 304; Smith, *The Books of Samuel*, p. 373; Segal, *The Books of Samuel*, pp. 363–364; Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel*, p. 415–416; Stoebe, *Das zweite Buch Samuelis*, pp. 36–38; A. Rofé, *Introduction to the Literature of the Hebrew Bible*, Jerusalem Biblical Studies 9 (Jerusalem: Simor, 2009), pp. 66–69. Rofé notes also the chiasmic structure of these six appendices: a, b, c – c, b, a (*ibid.*, p. 67).

The relationship between the Masoretic Text (i.e., MT) of 1 Kings and LXX 3 Kingdoms is beyond the scope of this study. Still, it is worth noting that the traditional split between the books of Samuel and Kings in the Masoretic Text is different than that in the Septuagint. The latter considers Samuel-Kings as one comprehensive composition, namely βασιλείων, which due to its length is split into four parts: βασιλείων α-δ / 1–4 Kingdoms, which is later followed also in the Vulgate (*Liber Regum*). Furthermore, in the Lucianic version of the Septuagint, MT 1 Kgs 1:1–2:11 is included in βασιλείων β (i.e., 2 Kingdoms i.e., roughly MT 2 Sam), and βασιλείων γ (i.e., 3 Kingdoms i.e., roughly MT 1 Kgs) starts with what appears in MT as 1 Kgs 2:12. The reason for having 3 Kingdoms begin at MT 1 Kgs 2:12 in LXX^{Luc} clearly hangs together with the wish to end 2 Kingdoms with the death of David and create a new beginning for the reign of Solomon. MT Kings, however, starts with the events that led to Solomon's kingship, including his co-regency with his father.

Without going into detail, this structure of the Septuagint could imply that the division of Samuel-Kings into separate books was itself a late development (how late is difficult to

Since the work of Leonhard Rost in 1926, 2 Samuel 9–20 and 1 Kings 1–2 are known as David's Throne Succession Narrative.⁵⁸ While accepted by many scholars,⁵⁹ however, this theory has not gone unchallenged, and admittedly all definitions of the Throne Succession Narrative appear to be somehow problematic.⁶⁰ Some scholars are even skeptical regarding its existence.⁶¹ For example, according to Yehezkel Kaufmann the only story that can really be named David's Throne Succession Narrative is 1 Kings 1–2, which he sees as a freestanding literary unit that does not directly relate to the stories in 2 Samuel 9–20.⁶² But Kaufmann ignores the fact that from a literary point of view, the style of 1 Kings 1–2, especially 1 Kings 1, is very close to that of 2 Samuel 9–20. Furthermore, all the figures who reach the end of their lives or careers in 1 Kings 2, play prominent roles in 2 Samuel 9–20 (i.e., David, Joab, Adonijah, Abiathar, and Shimei son of Gera), and the others (i.e., Bathsheba, Nathan, and the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite), though not mentioned further in the book of Kings, are also referred in 2 Samuel 9–20.

Steven L. McKenzie also contrasts the two passages on the grounds that: "1 Kgs 1–2 does not presuppose *any* of the events or characters of 2 Sam 11–12" (*italics added*).⁶³ Accordingly, he considers 2 Samuel

say), and that the connections between these materials in 2 Sam and 1 Kgs were evident to early readers. Thus Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* also begins Book VIII, regarding Solomon, with the death of David in 1 Kgs 2:12; see E. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012, pp. 147, 308–309 with bibliography. At the same time, however, the Lucianic division after 1 Kgs 2:11 also disrupts the connections between 1 Kgs 1:1–2:11 and 2:12–46. There are additional important differences between the Masoretic Text of the story of Solomon in 1 Kgs 2–11, and the version in the Septuagint; see van Keulen, *Two Versions of the Solomon Narrative*.

⁵⁸ See Rost, *Die Überlieferung von der Thronnachfolge Davids*.

⁵⁹ See, for instance, Rofé, *Introduction to the Literature of the Hebrew Bible*, pp. 24 (and the further references on [note 16](#)), 45, 67.

⁶⁰ For critical surveys of the various approaches and definitions of the Succession Narrative, see Kaufmann, *Mekibshunah shel Hayitzira Hamikrait*, pp. 169–179; R. N. Whybray, *The Succession Narrative: A Study of II Samuel 9–20, [and] I Kings 1 and 2*, *Studies in Biblical Theology* (Naperville: A. R. Allenson, 1968); Ishida, *History and Historical Writing in Ancient Israel*, pp. 102–107; Rofé, *Introduction to the Literature of the Hebrew Bible*, pp. 23–30.

⁶¹ For lists of bibliographical references, see Ishida, *History and Historical Writing in Ancient Israel*, p. 103, notes 7–8, and Rudnig, *Davids Thron: Redaktionskritische Studien zur Geschichte von der Thronnachfolge Davids*, pp. 1–14.

⁶² See Kaufmann, *Mekibshunah shel Hayitzira Hamikrait*, pp. 169–179. Recently this notion has been reasserted by Knapp, *Royal Apologetic in the Ancient Near East*, pp. 252–253, cf. also 195–200, without referring to Kaufmann's work.

⁶³ See S. L. McKenzie, "The So-Called Succession Narrative in the Deuteronomistic History," in A. de Pury and T. Römer (eds.), *Die Sogennante Thronfolgeschichte*

11–12 to be later (“post-Deuteronomistic”) than 1 Kings 1–2, because it anticipates Solomon’s succession in 1 Kings 1–2, while the latter does not refer to or depend on the former. Further, because Nathan is portrayed very differently in them, McKenzie claims that these two passages must derive from different hands. These arguments are now followed by Andrew Knapp.⁶⁴ However, both arguments are weak. The idea that a person must act in exactly the same manner in diverse situations, ignores the complexity of all human lives and activities in different circumstances. The situation at the end of David’s reign (1 Kgs 1–2) was entirely different than that recounted in 2 Samuel 10–12, so it should not be assumed that the characters would act in precisely the same ways in each. Even more important, the claim that 2 Samuel 11–12 is later than 1 Kings 1–2 leaves the latter narrative entirely without exposition, for it is *only* in 2 Samuel 11–12 that we are introduced to Bathsheba and her son Solomon, as well as her unique relationship with the king.⁶⁵ There is no way to understand Nathan’s approaching Bathsheba without knowledge of 2 Samuel 11–12. Indeed, Knapp himself acknowledges that nothing in 2 Samuel 9–20 except 2 Samuel 11–12 anticipates Solomon’s appearance in 1 Kings 1–2, but he does not realize that this undermines his entire argument. Because if it is true that Solomon and Bathsheba have not been mentioned before, then the sudden introduction of “Bathsheba, Solomon’s mother” in 1 Kings 1:11 has no basic exposition or explanation. Thus the Succession Narrative as a whole – except for some late additions – seems to be coherent, and there is a clear-cut connection between 2 Samuel 12:24–25 (which is itself part and parcel of 2 Samuel 10–12 as a whole) and 1 Kings 1–2. Neither of these blocks can be fully understood without the other.

Moreover, according to the list of David’s sons in 2 Samuel 3:2–5, Adonijah was David’s fourth son who was born in Hebron, while Solomon was only born later, as the fourth son in Jerusalem (2 Sam 5:14). However, the Succession Narrative only refers to four sons by name, without mentioning where they were born or in what order, and places Solomon (not Adonijah) in the fourth place: The story begins with Amnon, the firstborn, who raped his half-sister Tamar, and was then killed by her brother Absalom (2 Sam 13). Then Absalom himself rebelled

David’s: Neue Einsichten und Anfragen (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 2000), pp. 123–135 esp. 133.

⁶⁴ See Knapp, *Royal Apologetic in the Ancient Near East*, pp. 252–257.

⁶⁵ The only other reference to Solomon is in 2 Sam 5:14, which does not mention his mother or give any other information about his background apart from his birth in Jerusalem.

against his father and was killed (2 Sam 14–19). Then Adonijah, who was born after Absalom and was next in line to be king (1 Kgs 1:6), was rejected; and finally Solomon, *the fourth one*, replaced his father as king.⁶⁶ Therefore, the literary numerical pattern of “three-four” shapes the entire Throne Succession Narrative, with Solomon as its climax: The first three sons were rejected, and the fourth became king. Furthermore, the stories about the birth of Solomon (2 Sam 10–12) and his accession (1 Kgs 1–2), form an *inclusio* around this entire “three-four” pattern, and tie it together.⁶⁷ Therefore, 2 Samuel 9–20 plus 1 Kings 1–2 constitutes a unified legitimation for Solomon’s succession, and cannot be divided.

Similarly, though various attempts have been made to identify late additions or layers in these chapters, the amount of clearly late material is much less than is often claimed. The following examples are illustrative:

Timo Veijola has attempted to reconstruct the Deuteronomistic and post-Deuteronomistic redactional layers in 1 Kings 1–2, based on what he considers to be a certain unevenness in the text, along with occasional expressions that he identifies as Deuteronomistic. He proposes to distinguish three layers:⁶⁸

1. A pre-Deuteronomistic source, which is preserved in 1 Kings 1:1–29, 31–34, 38–45, 49–53; 2:13–23, 25–26a, 28–31a, 34–37a, 38–41, 42b, 43b, 46.⁶⁹ In other words, the largest portion of the text, 71.5 of the 99 verses in 1 Kings 1–2, is from the base layer (or, the original story).
2. A Deuteronomistic redactional layer, which is reflected in 1 Kings 1:30, 35–37, 46–48; 2:1–2, 4aα–11, 24, 26b–27, 31b–33, 37b, 44–45.⁷⁰ Veijola finds in these verses some vocabulary that he describes as “secondary” or “late additions,” such as: the use of

⁶⁶ On this pattern in the Succession Narrative, along with several other examples, see Kalimi, *Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 362–368; Y. Zakovitch, *The Pattern of the Numerical Sequence Three-Four in the Bible* [in Hebrew] (Ph.D. Dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1977), pp. 49–60. For further discussion of this numerical pattern of three-four, which is common in biblical literature, see Chapter Seven, §II, and herein, Chapter Ten, §III, 2.

⁶⁷ The only part of the Succession Narrative that stands outside this frame is the account of David’s kindness to Mephibosheth, in 2 Sam 9, which serves as background exposition for the story of Mephibosheth and Ziba in 2 Sam 19:25–31 (ET, 19:24–30).

⁶⁸ See Veijola, *Die ewige Dynastie*, pp. 16–30.

⁶⁹ See Veijola, *Die ewige Dynastie*, pp. 18, 23.

⁷⁰ See Veijola, *Die ewige Dynastie*, pp. 16–17, 18, 19, 23.

יחזי to refer to succession (1 Kgs 1:30, 35), instead of אחרי; the paralleled use of ישראל and יהודה instead of ישראל alone (1 Kgs 1:35); the word נגיד (1 Kgs 1:35); the expressions אשר נתן היום ישב עלי-כסאי (“who today has granted one of my offspring to sit on my throne”; 1:48; cf. 3:6); ועיני ראות (“and my eyes have seen”; 1:48; cf. Josh 23:14); and למלא את-דבר יהוה (“to fulfill the word of the Lord”; 2:27; cf. 2:4; Deut 9:5; 1 Sam 3:12; 2 Sam 7:25; 1 Kgs 6:12; 8:20; 12:15; Jer 29:10). He also notes that the whole of 1 Kings 2:1–9, which includes additional Deuteronomistic phrasing, corresponds to the structure of Joshua 1:1–6.⁷¹

3. Some post-Deuteronomistic additions: 1 Kings 2:3–4aβ, 12, plus supplements to 1:30; 2:42a, 43a.⁷²

In Veijola’s view, the purpose of all the secondary phrases and the Deuteronomistic and post-Deuteronomistic additions was to affirm the Lord’s choice and legitimization of Solomon as the appointed heir to the Davidic dynasty, as well as to justify his actions.⁷³

Without going into detailed arguments regarding all of what Veijola defines as Deuteronomistic and post-Deuteronomistic additions, the fact is that he devotes very little attention to the content of what he thinks is the base layer / original source, even though it makes up the largest part of the text. According to him, it offered no moral or theological justification for Solomon’s actions in securing the throne, and therefore reflects an “anti-Solomonic” tendency.⁷⁴ Veijola considers this to be a preexilic source, which means sometime from the tenth to the early sixth centuries BCE, without dating it more definitively. Also, he provides no convincing reasons for the claim that the original source is “anti-Solomonic”; this conclusion appears to be based entirely on his own claim that the pro-Solomonic statements are late. However, even if Veijola is correct that most or all of the statements that give theological or moral justification for Solomon’s actions are secondary (and one could dispute particular cases), that does not prove (and Veijola has not explicitly argued) that the base layer text is anti-Solomonic. It could simply be read as a neutral and realistic report of the events that led to Solomon’s securing the throne.

⁷¹ See Veijola, *De ewige Dynastie*, pp. 27–29.

⁷² Veijola, *Die ewige Dynastie*, pp. 23–24.

⁷³ Veijola, *Die ewige Dynastie*, pp. 18 (“es geht in der Bearbeitung um die theologische Legitimierung der Daviddynastie”), 24–30.

⁷⁴ See Veijola, *Die ewige Dynastie*, p. 26: “dessen tendenziell antisalomonische Darstellung.”

I am not convinced, however, that all references to Solomon's election are late. While the arguments that 2:2–4 is Deuteronomistic are basically convincing,⁷⁵ the other proposed additions are much less compelling. Why must it be assumed that all the justifications of Solomon's legitimacy as one chosen by God must be late or "Deuteronomistic" particularly? As we have already seen in [Chapter Six](#), divine legitimization of usurpers was widely attested across the ancient Near East from well before the time of Solomon, as well as in other early biblical literature. Moreover, as we have seen previously in this chapter, there is also some tension between the narrator's perspective and the historical situation he describes. That is, the narrator seems to be in favor of Solomon, and implicitly critiques Adonijah, who is ambitious and self-exalting (מְתַנְשֵׁא), unable to wait patiently for the death of his father (1 Kgs 1:5–6).⁷⁶ However, many indications remain in the text that Adonijah's actions were not inherently inappropriate, as he was indeed the legitimate royal successor, who was only supplanted by Solomon through dubious political intrigues, as skillfully described by the narrator.

Such tensions need not derive from successive layers of redaction; they are just as well explained as the result of an early pro-Solomonic author attempting to explain the situation which he could not deny (that Adonijah was the expected crown prince), perhaps because there were eyewitnesses to the actual events still alive, or because records for the events were still available. At the same time he also presents Solomon as one who was chosen by God (as well as by David himself), as I will detail in the next section (§III, 2).

Furthermore, Veijola's argument appears circular: Without articulating a reasonable argument based on independent evidence, Veijola asserts that the justifications of Solomon's legitimacy are late because, he further asserts, other justifications of the Davidic dynasty that use similar language (for instance in 2 Sam 7) are also late. For example, Veijola considers the use of the term מְלָכָה in the sense of "kingdom" or "dynasty" (1 Kgs 1:37, 47; 2:33, 45, and not simply "throne" as in 1 Kgs 1:13, 17, 20, 24, 27, 30, 35, 46, 48; 2:4, 12, 19, 24) to be late, based on its occurrences only in passages that he himself considers late. However, he does not provide any independent evidence that such a meaning is "late," so what is this determination based upon? Without dealing with the question of whether the meaning of the term מְלָכָה as "kingdom" or

⁷⁵ See [Chapter Eleven](#), §V, 1.

⁷⁶ Cf. Mulder, *1 Kings 1–11*, p. 43; Cogan, *1 Kings*, p. 157.

“dynasty” is early (e.g., 2 Sam 3:10) or late, this methodology is faulty: How can the use of the term in this sense be proof that these texts are late, if it is on the basis of these very texts that he concludes that this meaning of the term is late?⁷⁷ Similarly, what makes the term נגיד (1 Kgs 1:35) a late editorial addition?⁷⁸ In fact, it appears in early as well as late biblical literature. This term is used for Saul, David, Solomon, and other kings in Judah, Israel, and other nations (such as the ruler of Tyre).⁷⁹ Are all of these cases editorial and late additions? Should the usage of the phrase על ישראל ועל יהודה (1 Kgs 1:35b) really be considered late, as Veijola claims,⁸⁰ or could it refer – as already explained by Albrecht Alt (as Veijola admits) – to the dual kingdoms that were united under David (2 Sam 5:5) and Solomon?⁸¹ And why must the narrator always use יהוה – has he no literary freedom sometimes to use also יהוה אלהי ישראל?⁸²

Thilo A. Rudnig has suggested that a very brief, basic version of the story in 1 Kings 1 is from Solomon’s time (tenth century BCE) and went through more than *thirteen* redactions, including several “additions,” comprehensive re-workings, and numerous very late glosses. This whole process took place particularly in the Persian and Hellenistic periods, until the third century BCE.⁸³ Fortunately, there are several fragments of Samuel-Kings among the Dead Sea Scrolls – usually dated from ca. the mid-third century BCE and on – which probably caused Rudnig to stop where he does; otherwise, who knows how long these “continuous redactions” would have been extended (to the Mishnaic or Talmudic eras?).

The notion that we can reconstruct each and every hand at work in these texts, absent any concrete manuscript evidence, makes projects such as Rudnig’s overly confident and extremely speculative. The reconstruction of thirteen specific, distinguishable strata in a single text is “scholarship” *ad absurdum*, and touches on the unbearable. One might wonder if there is any other example of such a superfluous literary process of a story

⁷⁷ See Veijola, *Die ewige Dynastie*, pp. 26, 60, 75–76.

⁷⁸ See Veijola, *Die ewige Dynastie*, p. 17 and note 8 there.

⁷⁹ See, for example, 1 Sam 9:16; 10:1; 13:14; 25:30; 2 Sam 5:2; 6:21; 7:8; 1 Kgs 14:7; 16:2; 20:5; Ezek 28:2.

⁸⁰ See Veijola, *Die ewige Dynastie*, pp. 17–18.

⁸¹ See Alt, “Die Staatenbildung der Israeliten in Palästina,” vol. 2, pp. 1–65, esp. pp. 44–45 (“Das Reich Davids und Salomos”), and see, §II, 2, (1). This phrase also appears in 1 Kgs 5:5 (ET, 4:25); 2 Sam 24:1; and cf. 1 Sam 15:4; 2 Sam 24:9.

⁸² Contra Veijola, *Die ewige Dynastie*, p. 17. Regarding the words מלכותו and ממלכה in 1 Kgs 2:12, 46, see [Chapter Eleven](#), §IV note 25.

⁸³ See Rudnig, *Dauids Thron: Redaktionskritische Studien zur Geschichte von der Thronnachfolge Davids*.

that took approximately 700 years to be established, in the ancient (or non-ancient) world literature. Is there any anachronism, name, institution, or unique idea from the Persian or Hellenistic periods in the story under review? Is there any late linguistic element in the story (e.g., Late Biblical Hebrew, Aramaic, Persian, or Greek words, syntax, and so forth)? Why then should these proposed redactional layers be dated particularly to the Persian and Hellenistic periods? What necessity would there have been at those proposed times to create such a story?

Like a surgeon with a scalpel, the tools of redaction criticism can be used carefully, to cut away an appendix when necessary. But to cut the patient to pieces leaves not a healthier whole, but simply a dead body. So when redaction criticism is carried to such extremes as Rudnig does, and not based on solid data, the result is not to restore the text, but to kill it. Why, when it comes to the Israelite literary legacy, do some scholars choose such unverifiable and irresponsible methods?⁸⁴

Already over a century ago Julius Wellhausen recognized: "That in 2 Samuel 9–20 and 1 Kings 1–2 we have a very good historical source, needs no proof. Despite all partisanship for David and Solomon, the course of events is reported with obvious objectivity and with great interest in the material detail."⁸⁵ In favor of the antiquity of these texts, it is worth mentioning that there are some similarities between the biblical Succession Narrative (of which 1 Kgs 1–2 is a constituent part) and some ancient Near Eastern royal historical writings, which set the biblical narrative in its natural – more or less contemporary or very close – ancient Near Eastern context (with the closest parallels attested in the Neo-Assyrian period), rather than relatively much later periods such as the Persian or Hellenistic.⁸⁶ Therefore, apart from the first portion of the Testament of David in 1 Kings 2:2–4, which probably was added by the Deuteronomistic historian, I consider 1 Kings 1:1–53 plus 2:1, 5–46a as

⁸⁴ For other methodological approaches similar to that of Rudnig, see [Chapter Five, §III, 1](#). For an additional critical review of Rudnig's book, see Dietrich, "Von den ersten Königen Israels," pp. 267–272. Here one might also ask how it is possible that one of the most beautiful and superb historical and literary works of the ancient Israelites could have been composed through such a process.

⁸⁵ "Dass wir in 2. Sam. 9–20. 1. Reg. 1. 2 eine sehr gute historische Quelle besitzen, bedarf keines Beweises. Bei aller Parteinahme für David und Salomo wird doch der Hergang der Dinge mit sichtlicher Objektivität und mit großem Interesse für das stoffliche Detail berichtet"; Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments*, p. 259.

⁸⁶ See in detail, for example, [Chapter Six](#), and Ishida, *History and Historical Writing in Ancient Israel*, pp. 107–136.

one literary unit. Furthermore, since the narrator has a deep knowledge of the details and the situation as a whole at the beginning of Solomon's reign, it is possible – although not necessary – that the author either was himself an eyewitness, or relies on eyewitness tradition. In any case, the preservation of elements that appear at odds with the text's pro-Solomonic stance makes it very unlikely that the story was made up from scratch by the author or editor, and by no means requires the conclusion that it developed over numerous generations.

That the Succession Narrative could have been composed in Solomon's time or soon after stands in contrast to the assumption of some scholars, for instance Walter Dietrich, that "the 10th – early 9th centuries were not yet a period of broad literary creation and differentiated spirituality" among the Israelites, sufficient to allow the composition of high-level literature such as the Succession Narrative.⁸⁷ However, was there really in all that lengthy period not even a single skillful author / scribe among all the Israelites? This assumption is simply a baseless, artificial attempt to portray the ancient Israelites as a cultural backwater, cut off from the widespread literary activity across the ancient Near East since long before the tenth century. There is no reason to assume that the royal court could not have had at least a few skilled scribes with professional education and training, acquainted with the multicultural and literary traditions of many generations of writers in Canaan and the surrounding ancient Near Eastern cultures.⁸⁸

In sum, while the Succession Narrative appears to combine multiple elements, including the apparent use of sources from the royal archives, but also other stories concerning David and his sons, these have been

⁸⁷ "Das 10. und das beginnende 9. Jahrhundert v.Chr. waren noch keine Epoche breiten literarischen Schaffens und differenzierter Geistigkeit"; W. Dietrich, *Die frühe Königszeit in Israel: 10. Jahrhundert v. Chr.*, Biblische Enzyklopädie 3 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1997), p. 229, and note 7 on pp. 229–230, with references to the works of D. W. Jamieson-Drake and H. M. Niemann.

⁸⁸ See the detailed discussion by A. Demsky, *Literacy in Ancient Israel*, Biblical Encyclopedia Library 28 [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2012), pp. 26–41, esp. pp. 31–33, and there also a critical review of several scholars, such as D. W. Jamieson-Drake and N. Na'aman, as well as references to earlier bibliography. On the scribal culture in the ancient Near East as well as the Israelite scribes and upper class literati, see Demsky, *ibid.*, pp. 61–93, esp. pp. 67, 131–168. See also U. Cassuto, *The Goddess Anath: Canaanite Epics of the Patriarch Age*, trans. I. Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1971), pp. 18–20 (i.e., pp. 19–21 in the Hebrew original), who convincingly shows that the ancient Israelite literature is a direct continuation of the Canaanite, which developed many centuries previously.

combined into a unified composition at one time, not simply built up ad hoc at various times by various writers over centuries. Except for some relatively minor additions, the most likely period at which such a combination of sources could have been accomplished is during the reign of Solomon, whose succession the text legitimates. That such an apology could have been written shortly after the events it describes is confirmed by the examples of Hattušili III and Hazael, whose apologies were each composed during the reigns of these apparent usurpers.⁸⁹

2. *Apologetic Features in the Succession Narrative*

It seems that 1 Kings 1–2 contains a similar form of royal apology as does 2 Samuel 12:24–25. Indeed, 1 Kings appears no less concerned with royal legitimation than Chronicles is (see §IV). The difference is that Chronicles presents Solomon as divinely elected from the first minute, without admitting any stain on his origins or character, while Samuel-Kings presents him as one born amidst scandal, who gained the throne due to court intrigue, but still affirms that he was divinely elected. In this way, the Succession Narrative's affirmation of Solomon's divine election parallels the royal apologies of many other usurpers across the ancient Near East, as we saw in Chapter Six. However, by including the questionable deeds that led others to doubt Solomon's legitimacy in the first place, the Succession Narrative is unique among the royal apologies of surrounding cultures. None of the latter admit any negative deeds by the usurping king.

Moreover, whereas Kings seeks to exonerate Solomon from the charges of illegitimacy and usurpation, Chronicles never admits that such charges were ever raised at all. Thus, the pro-Solomonic elements in the account of his rise in 1 Kings 1–2 should not be seen as late attempts to justify his actions, but are part and parcel of the core account, which presents but seeks to justify Solomon's role in the proceedings. In that context, the author of the Succession Narrative employs several key strategies to exonerate Solomon from the charge of usurpation:

First, the structure of the narrative as a whole strongly emphasizes that Solomon played no active role in the plot to place him on the throne. The conspiracy was initiated by Nathan, and supported by Bathsheba and some others, but the narrator *never hints* that Solomon himself said or did anything to participate in or encourage this conspiracy. It is not even said

⁸⁹ On these examples, see Chapter Six, §III, (c) and IV, 2, B.

that he knew about it, at least until after David had been taken in by the conspiracy and declared Solomon to be the successor. His first action comes only after he sat on the royal throne as co-regent with his father (1 Kgs 1:46), at which point he sent Adonijah home, without condemning him for his actions (1:50–53). Only later, after David's death, did Solomon take a more active role in securing his power, as we will see in the [next chapter](#).

Second, we have already noted that the entire Succession Narrative has been framed according to the literary pattern of three-four, with Solomon as the climactic, fourth figure. Yet the specific features of this use of the pattern warrant further discussion. First, though Solomon is presented fourth, that does not prove that the three previous were all illegitimate. Absalom obviously rebelled, and was therefore disqualified, and Amnon was killed due to his rape of Tamar, but Adonijah is not condemned in this or any other way. As we have seen, the biblical text never states that he was a usurper, while many details of its account imply that he was indeed the expected successor to David, who never rebelled against him. In that light, the references and allusions to Absalom in 1 Kings 1–2 do not serve to present Adonijah as a rebel just like his brother, but can instead be seen to contrast him with Absalom, implying that he was rejected *despite* his legitimate claim to the throne. According to the Succession Narrative, therefore, Solomon did not succeed David because he was the rightful successor from the beginning, but rather *despite* his late-born status, because of God's favor.

This manner of justifying a usurper is not unprecedented among ancient Near Eastern royal apologies,⁹⁰ but it is distinctive of the biblical tradition, as reflected also in the Patriarchal Narratives in Genesis. There several late-born sons are claimed to have eventually become the chosen heirs to their father, not by beating back attempted usurpations by their brothers, but instead by unexpectedly taking their places. For instance, according to Genesis 25 and 27, Esau was the firstborn and favorite of his father Isaac, but Jacob became the heir through a combination of deception and divine favor.⁹¹ Though Esau is claimed to have sold his birthright for a bowl of lentils, the text is clear that it was his to lose, and

⁹⁰ See [Chapter Six](#), §§III, (c) and IV, 2, D regarding the Esarhaddon of Assyria and Xerxes I of Persia.

⁹¹ On this, see e.g., J. E. Anderson, *Jacob and the Divine Trickster: A Theology of Deception and YHWH's Fidelity to the Ancestral Promise in the Jacob Cycle*, Siphrut: Literature and Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures 5 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011). Other examples of late-born sons taking the highest rung, without any claim that their predecessors were

acquired by Jacob only through dubious means.⁹² The same pattern appears to have been applied to Solomon: He was neither the firstborn nor the expected heir to his father's throne, but nevertheless took power through dubious (and possibly deceptive) means.⁹³ In both cases, while the narrator includes many details in the account that imply that the successor to their father was in fact a usurper, he nevertheless explicitly affirms that this came about due to God's will. In the case of Jacob, his divine election is affirmed both before and after he deceptively stole the blessing from his brother, including at his birth (see Gen 25:23; 26:23–24; 28:12–15). Likewise, Kings acknowledges that Adonijah was the expected successor to David for the throne, but still emphasizes that Solomon has not only been chosen by David as a result of a palace intrigue, but also and especially by God himself. We have already seen how this is implied by the naming of Solomon “Yediyah” and the claim that “the Lord loved him” in 2 Samuel 12:24–25 (see [Chapter Six](#)), but there are also additional indications of Solomon's divine election in 1 Kings 1–2:

- (1) Later on, even Solomon's rival, Adonijah, states: “I should reign; but the kingdom is turned about, and has become my brother's [i.e., Solomon's]; *for it was his from the Lord*” (1 Kgs 2:15b).
- (2) Solomon's reaction to Adonijah includes the assertion: “as *the Lord lives, who has established me, and set me on the throne of David my father, and who made a house* [i.e., a family, dynasty] for me,⁹⁴ as he promised” (1 Kgs 2:24).⁹⁵

usurpers, include Isaac, Judah, Joseph and David, who were all chosen over their older brother(s).

⁹² There are many other examples, such as Cain and Abel (Gen 4:1–5); Isaac and Ishmael (Gen 16–18; 21); Manasseh and Ephraim (Gen 49:11–20); Reuben and Judah (Gen 49:2–12; 1 Chr 5:1–2); Moses and Aaron (Exod 3–4); David and his brothers (1 Sam 16:6–13); see also Greenspahn, *When Brothers Dwell Together*.

⁹³ Another parallel between the stories is that in both cases the mother plays a key role in advocating for her son, though in different ways. In Gen 27:6–13, Rebecca explicitly urges Jacob to deceive his father (her husband) in order to secure the blessing in place of his brother.

⁹⁴ For the idiom *אשר עשה לי בית* (“who made a house for me,” cf. Exod 1:21; 2 Sam 7:11, and see S. M. Paul, “Exodus 1:21: ‘To Found a Family’ – A Biblical and Akkadian Idiom,” *Divrei Shalom*, Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 23 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2005), pp. 177–180.

⁹⁵ As already discussed in [Chapter Six](#), §III, (c), this verse refers to Nathan's prophecy to David in 2 Sam 7:11–12. This historian attempts to show the fulfillment of God's words by his prophet; see also, [Chapter Eleven](#), §V, 1.

- (3) David's approval of Solomon as his successor in 1 Kings 1:48 reflects the same idea: "Blessed be *the Lord*, the King of Israel, who today *has granted* one of my offspring to sit on my throne and permitted me to witness it."

References to Solomon's divine election also appear in two stories outside the Succession Narrative: Once in Gibeon, when Solomon replies to God, "And now, O Lord my God, *you have made your servant king* instead of David my father" (1 Kgs 3:7a). And it is mentioned once again in the statement of the Queen of Sheba: "May *the Lord your God who chooses you* be blessed, to place you on the throne of Israel. Because the Lord loves Israel forever, *He appoints you king*" (יהי יהוה אלהיך ברוך אשר חפץ בך לתתך על כסא ישראל באהבת יהוה את ישראל לעולם וישימך למלך . . . , 1 Kgs 10:9–10).

It is not necessary to conclude that this idea is a late addition to the Succession Narrative; as we have seen, it frames the entire account in 2 Samuel 12:24–25 and 1 Kings 2:15, 24. Yet neither must it be assumed (as the text in 2 Sam 12:25 implies) that this idea predates Solomon's rise to power. On the contrary, it appears to represent a *post-eventum* attempt to justify Solomon's succession, claiming divine legitimation for his ascension even while admitting that he was not the expected successor. Thus, in the Succession Narrative as a whole the overall three-four structure and the explicit references to the Lord's love for and choice of Solomon work together to justify his otherwise questionable rise to power in place of his older brothers.

IV. THE LEGITIMACY OF SOLOMON'S SUCCESSION ACCORDING TO CHRONICLES

The Chronicler agrees wholeheartedly with the author/editor of Samuel-Kings (or more precisely, of the Succession Narrative) that Solomon was the divinely chosen successor to David, but he emphasizes this even more strongly by excluding the entire story of Nathan's conspiracy with Bathsheba against the rightful successor, Adonijah (1 Kgs 1:11–53). In order to cover Nathan's tracks completely, he also omits the reference to Nathan giving Solomon the name Yedidyah in 2 Samuel 12:24–25 (together with the whole David-Bathsheba story in 2 Sam 11:1–12:25), as well as the list of Solomon's administrative officials (1 Kgs 4), which includes Nathan's sons (4:5). According to the Chronicler, Nathan was not actively involved in the election and coronation of Solomon. Nathan's role is limited to his earlier prophecy concerning the Temple building and

Davidic dynasty (1 Chr 17 // 2 Sam 7). The Chronicler did not want to present God's messenger in a negative light. He clearly also did not want to show that the builder of the Temple gained the throne as a result of court intrigues and manipulations.

Because the Chronicler omitted the main story (1 Kgs 1:5–53), he also left out the setting (or the exposition) of that story (1:1–4). The omission of 1 Kings 1:1–4 also fits well with the principle of retribution that guides the Chronistic history: Because being healthy or sick is considered to be a reward or a punishment,⁹⁶ the description of David as sick, weak, and bedridden might be interpreted as implying punishment for his transgression(s).⁹⁷ Desiring to avoid such an interpretation, the Chronicler describes David as an aged man (1 Chr 23:1), but one who is still healthy, energetic, and active. David makes a census of the Levites and organizes them in divisions (1 Chr 23:1–32), along with the priests (1 Chr 24:1–19), singers (1 Chr 25:1–31), gatekeepers, and others (1 Chr 26:1–32). David assembles the people in Jerusalem, stands on his feet, and delivers a long and impressive speech.⁹⁸ He prays, appoints Solomon as king, and celebrates the occasion with all Israel (1 Chr 28–29). Thus the setting as described in Kings is replaced in Chronicles by one that depicts the many activities of the aged David, and the peaceful and smooth coronation of Solomon by his father, brothers, the kingdom's officials, and all Israel. The Chronicler, who omitted virtually all the negative stories about David (e.g., 2 Sam 11:1–12:25) and presented him as a role model for all kings to come (e.g., 2 Chr 11:17 [an "addition"]; 2 Chr 7:10 // 1 Kgs 8:66), now describes him as a righteous person who spent his last days without any physical or mental problems, or any political crises. David was not sick and weak in his last years, because he did not sin. On the contrary, he was healthy and active as a result of doing right in the sight of the Lord, and devoted himself to appointing his heir and preparing him to build the Temple.

The Chronicler also presents a new narrative of Solomon's ascension in place of the one in 1 Kings 1:5–53 that he omits. According to his rewriting of several earlier texts, what really happened was the fulfillment

⁹⁶ On sickness as a punishment, see, for example, 2 Chr 16:7–12 (cf. with 1 Kgs 15:12); 2 Chr 21:18–19; 26:16–21; 32:24–26; Exod 15:26; Deut 7:15 (health for keeping the Lord's law); 28:27, 35 (disease for not keeping it).

⁹⁷ Already the Talmudic and medieval Sages considered David's sickness and weakness to be a punishment for his earlier misbehavior; see [note 6](#).

⁹⁸ This in a clear contrast to the short blessing to the Lord that he states from his bed according to 1 Kgs 1:47b–48.

of the divine plan. The decision about who would be the next king over Israel was not only David's (1 Kgs 1:20, 27, 43). Rather, it was, first and foremost, God's decision, because the throne belongs to Him.⁹⁹ Solomon was chosen to reign over Israel by God himself, and David simply followed the divine commandment, rather than the last-minute decision that circumstances forced him to make (1 Kgs 1:32–35).

Did the Chronicler create this story from scratch, or did he draw inspiration from earlier biblical texts? Clearly, it contradicts the main line of the narrative in 1 Kings 1, where Nathan conspires and speaks privately rather than in God's name or with prophetic authority. More surprising, perhaps, is that the Chronicler does not repeat any of the allusions to Solomon's election in the Succession Narrative (especially 2 Sam 12:24–25; 1 Kgs 2:15, 24; cf. 1:48), though he surely knew and built on them. In addition, he also draws directly on other texts that intended to legitimate Solomon's succession:

- (1) According to 1 Kings 3:7a, in Gibeon, Solomon replies to God: "And now, O Lord my God, *you have made your servant king* instead of David my father." The Chronicler not only takes over this information (2 Chr 1:8b), but also strengthens the king's statement by adding: "for you [i.e., God] *have made me king* over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude" (כי אתה המלכתני על עם רב כעפר הארץ; 2 Chr 1:9b).
- (2) In 2 Chronicles 9:8 the Chronicler cites the text from 1 Kings 10:9–10 that ascribes to the Queen of Sheba the statement that the Lord chose Solomon and placed him on the throne of Israel, "Because the Lord loves Israel forever, He appoints you king."
- (3) The Chronicler used passages from Ezra-Nehemiah in several places.¹⁰⁰ He probably also noticed Nehemiah's statement regarding Solomon's accession to the throne: "*and God made him king* over all Israel" (ויתנוו אלהים מלך על כל ישראל; Neh 13:26).

Beyond this, the Chronicler also presents Solomon in a number of other passages as a divinely chosen king, where no such claim appears in Samuel-Kings. He states this very clearly and straightforwardly, and prepares his audience for it already in his description of David's reign:

⁹⁹ See 1 Chr 17:14; 29:11; 2 Chr 13:8, and later in this chapter.

¹⁰⁰ See Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History*, pp. 8–9, 129–130, 141, 320–322; idem, *An Ancient Israelite Historian*, pp. 90–92.

- (1) The Chronicler also presents the king as one who was given a name by God, but instead of being named Yedidyah *after* he was born (2 Sam 12:25), God named him Solomon, even *before* he was born (1 Chr 22:5–11, an “addition”):¹⁰¹ “The word of the Lord came to me [i.e., David], saying . . . a *son shall be born to you*, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies around; for *his name shall be Solomon* . . . He shall build a house for my name; and *he shall be my son, and I will be his father*; and I will *establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever* ” (1 Chr 22:8–10).

The motif of being divinely appointed for a position while still in the mother's womb is known explicitly from the prophetic literature such as Jeremiah 1:4–5 and Isaiah 49:1 – from which the Chronicler probably took the notion – as well as from various ancient Near Eastern royal inscriptions. Above we have already noted the examples of Aššur-rēš-iši I, Adad-nirari III, Esarhaddon, Aššurbanipal, and Nabonidus.¹⁰²

- (2) The Chronicler defines Solomon's relationship with God metaphorically by the adoption formula: “He shall be my son and I will be his father.”¹⁰³ He asserts: “And he [i.e., God] said to me [i.e., David], Solomon, your son, shall build my house and my courts; for *I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father* ” (1 Chr 28:6; see also 22:10). In the latter verses the Chronicler relates the assertions that he attributes to David with Nathan's prophecy in 1 Chr 17:11–13 (// 2 Sam 7:12–14), and shows them to be a fulfillment of that prophetic promise:

והיה כי מלאו ימיו ללכת עם אבתיך והקימוני את זרעך אחריו אשר יהיה מבניך
והכינני את מלכותי. הוא יבנה לי בית וכננני את כסאו עד עולם. אני אהיה לו לאב והוא
יהיה לי לבן.

And it shall come to pass, when your days are fulfilled, when you must go to be with your fathers, that *I will rise up your offspring* [lit., seed] *after you, who shall be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build me a house* [i.e., the Temple] *and I will establish his throne forever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son.*

¹⁰¹ On these issues, see also, Chapter Five, §III, 2, D, Chapter Six, §III, (b) and Chapter Seven §IV, 1.

¹⁰² See Chapter Six, §III, (c), pp. 178–180.

¹⁰³ For this adoption formula, see the detailed discussion and bibliographical references in Cooke, “The Israelite King as Son of God,” pp. 202–225; Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 264–265.

- (3) By omitting the stories of Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah, the Chronicler obscures the overarching three-four pattern that structures the Succession Narrative, but he himself also employs this literary motif in a different way, in two passages: 1 Chronicles 28:4–5 (an “addition”) and 1 Chronicles 3:5–6 (a modification of 2 Sam 5:14–15). The latter, which identifies Solomon as the fourth son of Bathsheba, has already been discussed,¹⁰⁴ but 1 Chronicles 28:4–5 is an even clearer reflection of the motif. Here David gives a speech describing Solomon as God’s chosen king, which specifically places Solomon in the fourth and final place (28:4–5):¹⁰⁵

- ויבחר יהוה אלהי ישראל בי מכל בית אבי להיות למלך על ישראל לעולם
 1. כי ביהודה בחר לנניד
 2. ובבית יהודה בית אבי
 3. ובבני אבי בי רצה להמליך על כל ישראל
 4. ומכל בני כי רבים בנים נתן לי יהוה ויבחר בשלמה בני לשבת על כסא מלכות יהוה על ישראל.

And the Lord God of Israel selected me from all the house of my father, to be king over Israel forever.

1. For He selected *Judah* as monarch,¹⁰⁶
2. and in the house of Judah, *my ancestral house*,
3. from my father’s sons, he wanted to install *me* as king over all Israel.
4. And of all my sons—for the Lord has given me many sons—he selected my son *Solomon* to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel.¹⁰⁷

- (4) The author of Chronicles also stresses the actual fulfillment of the divine promises:

וישב שלמה על כסא יהוה למלך תחת דוד אביו ויצלח וישמעו אליו כל ישראל. וכל השרים והגברים וגם כל בני המלך דוד נתנו יד תחת שלמה המלך. ויגדל יהוה את שלמה למעלה לעיני כל ישראל ויתן עליו הוד מלכות אשר לא היה על כל מלך לפניו על ישראל.

Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him. And all the officials, and the mighty men, and likewise all the sons of King David, submitted

¹⁰⁴ See Chapter Seven, §II.

¹⁰⁵ See in detail, Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, p. 365; and §III, 1.

¹⁰⁶ In fact, Judah is also mentioned in the *fourth* place among Jacob’s sons: after the first three sons – Reuben, Simeon, and Levi – had been rejected because of their wicked acts, Judah took the favorable position (Gen 49:3–12; and see also Gen 34; 35:22).

¹⁰⁷ A similar literary structure already appears in the case of election of Saul in 1 Sam 10:20–21. However, in the latter the structure is “two-three” (Benjamin, Mitri, *Saul*) rather than “three-four.”

themselves to Solomon the king. And *the Lord magnified Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel.* (1 Chr 29:23–25; cf. 2 Chr 1:1, both “additions”)

Thus, the Chronicler clearly emphasizes Solomon's status as a divinely chosen king, as were Saul and David who had preceded him.¹⁰⁸ In contrast to 1 Kings 1–2, and perhaps in order to cover up that story of Solomon's scandalous access to the throne, the Chronicler represents the new king as a fully *legitimate* one, chosen by the Lord and King David. The succession was completely harmonious. All heavenly and earthly forces combined together to make it a successful occasion: God himself called his name Solomon and appointed him – already in his mother's womb – to be a king over Israel and to build his Temple. This notion was adopted and supported by David as well as all Israel, all the kingdom's officials and mighty men, and *all* the sons of David (כל בני המלך דוד), including Adonijah and those who supported him (1 Kgs 1:9, 19, 25).¹⁰⁹ Presenting Solomon as a divinely chosen king automatically calls into question the plausibility of the account in the book of Kings. Who could oppose one who was chosen by the Lord himself, by David and his sons and officials, and all of Israel? Accordingly, the Chronicler omits that story from Kings altogether.¹¹⁰

V. CONCLUSION

A careful examination of 1 Kings 1 demonstrates that Solomon was not the legitimate heir to the throne: Adonijah was older and next in the direct royal line to inherit his father's throne, he was supported by most of David's sons and his top officials as well as the officials of Judah, and his succession was expected by all Israel. Solomon rose to the kingship as a result of power-struggles and intrigues in the palace during the last days of the sick and weak David, who was manipulated by Nathan and Bathsheba.

Despite all that, however, the Succession Narrative in Samuel-Kings presents Solomon as the divinely chosen king. The entire account is structured according to the literary pattern of three-four, and framed by

¹⁰⁸ See 1 Sam 9:16–10:1; 15:1, 11, 35 (Saul); 1 Sam 16:1–13; 2 Sam 7:8 // 1 Chr 17:7; Ps 89:4 (ET, 89:3; David). In fact, the motif of a deity choosing a king was common also in other ancient Near Eastern cultures; see [Chapter Six](#).

¹⁰⁹ Adonijah is mentioned just once in the genealogical list of the Davidic dynasty; 1 Chr 3:2 // 2 Sam 3:4.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Kalimi, “Placing the Chronicler in His Own Historical Context,” p. 188, note 55.

references to the Lord's love for and choosing of Solomon. According to the Succession Narrative, Solomon was chosen by God to follow David despite the fact that he was not in line for the throne, and even despite the political intrigue through which he gained the succession. Thus, much as Genesis 25–27 presents Jacob as the younger son who was simultaneously chosen by God and took the firstborn's blessing deceptively, the Succession Narrative presents Solomon as both chosen by the Lord and a usurper. As we have seen in [Chapter Six](#), the claim of divine favor by usurpers is very common in other royal apologies from across the ancient Near East, and serves as a form of royal legitimation, but here it has a distinctively Israelite slant, reflecting the frequent motif of a younger son chosen by God over his older brothers.

The Chronistic history shares this concern to show that Solomon is the divinely chosen king of Israel, but it accomplishes this goal through entirely different means. Here nearly all the elements that cast a negative light on David, Nathan, Bathsheba, and Solomon (2 Sam 11–12; 1 Kgs 1–2) are omitted. Based on data found in various earlier “biblical” texts, the Chronicler reaffirms that Solomon was the rightful ruler and Temple-builder, chosen by David, and especially the Lord, and projects this back even before his birth (1 Chr 22:7–10). It contradicts the portrayal of brotherly conflict from Samuel-Kings in order to claim that all Solomon's brothers and the officials of the kingdom supported his access to the throne. This contrast is carried even further in the Chronicler's rewriting of the story of Solomon's coronation and the carrying out of his father's testament, as seen in the [next chapter](#).

CHAPTER 11

The Coronation of Solomon

David's Testament and Its Implementation

I. THE CORONATION CEREMONY: KINGS VERSUS CHRONICLES

The author of the Succession Narrative recounts the coronation of Solomon in dramatic fashion. After the intrigues that took place in David's palace in 1 Kings 1:11–37, the rushed coronation of Solomon was undertaken not by the king's top officials, the chief commander of the army (Joab), and the chief priest (Abiathar), who supported Adonijah (1:7; 2:22, 28), but by relatively lower-level officials, Benaiah the officer of the mercenaries, Zadok the priest, and the court prophet Nathan (1:32, cf. 8, 10, 38, 44).

The story goes as follows: Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and some others put Solomon on a royal mule – David's own¹ – and ride down to Gihon. For safety purposes Benaiah and his mercenaries accompany them, probably in case of an unexpected disturbance from Adonijah's supporters or anyone else. At Gihon, Nathan and Zadok anoint Solomon king over Israel,² with the oil preserved in a horn that

¹ For the notion that the king had a special mule/horse, see also Esth 6:8b and 6:9–11, that speaks about a specific horse – “the horse” (סוס).

² In ancient Israel, the king was anointed by a priest and/or prophet. Thus, the prophet and priest Samuel anointed Saul (1 Sam 10:1) and David (16:13); the disciple of the prophet Elisha anointed Jehu as king of Israel (2 Kgs 9:1–14); Jehoiada the high priest anointed Joash (2 Kgs 11:12–14); the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite does not actually anoint Jeroboam son of Nebat; he just tears his robe in twelve pieces and gives ten to Jeroboam (1 Kgs 11:29–31).

was kept in the Tent.³ They blow trumpets and shout “Long live King Solomon!”⁴ Then the people following them play flutes, raise their voices, and rejoice so loudly that “the earth split[s]” at their sound, and the noise is heard from across the city (1 Kgs 1:38–41).⁵ Solomon then returns and sits on David’s throne to reign as a co-regent, but with the intention to succeed him (1 Kgs 1:46; 2:12a).⁶ These core features of the story are repeated three times: once in David’s order to crown Solomon (1:32–35); once in the fulfillment of the order (1:38–40), and a third time in the report of Jonathan son of Abiathar to Adonijah and Joab (1:44–48).⁷

A different picture emerges from the book of Chronicles: 1 Chronicles 23:1 recounts in general that “when David was old and full of days, he made Solomon his son king over Israel,” without detailing when, where, or how it happened. In 1 Chronicles 29:20–25 the Chronicler responds to these issues meticulously: “And they *ate and drank before the Lord* on that day with great gladness. And they made

³ “The Tent” is the one that was erected by David for the Ark (2 Sam 6:17); it is also mentioned later in 1 Kgs 2:28; 8:4 (// 2 Chr 5:5).

⁴ Compare 1 Sam 10:24 (Saul); 2 Sam 16:16 (Hushai the Gethite to Absalom); 1 Kgs 1:25 (Adonijah); 2 Kgs 11:12 (Joash).

⁵ On the motif of hearing from a distance, and its significance in the coronation of Solomon and its biblical context, see [Chapter Twelve](#).

⁶ Presumably, the coronation took place according to a set protocol; see below [Chapter Twelve](#), §II, 2.

⁷ Such repetition of a story is common in biblical as well as Ugaritic literature. For example, the story about Rebecca’s meeting with the servant of Abraham is repeated four times (Gen 24:12–14, 17–21, 42–44, 45–46); similarly the dreams of Pharaoh are repeated (Gen 41:1–7, 17–24); as is the description of the Tabernacle: once when God orders Moses (Exod 25:1–31:11) and once when Moses fulfills it (Exod 35:4–39:43). The inauguration offerings of the Israelite chiefs are repeated twelve times (Num 7:12–83). In the Ugaritic *Aqhat* epic, a long list of commands related to honoring one’s father is repeated four times (*Aqhat* 1:26–33; 1:44–48; 2:1–8; 2:16–23); S. B. Parker, “Aqhat,” in S. B. Parker (ed.), *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, Writings from the Ancient World (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1997), pp. 49–88, esp. pp. 53–56; see also Cassuto, *The Goddess Anath*, pp. 41–44 (i.e., pp. 34–36 in the Hebrew original). In the late first century CE, Josephus was probably no longer familiar with this feature of biblical and ancient Near Eastern literature, or found it unnecessary to repeat it. Therefore, he omitted the detailed repetitions and just wrote “she [i.e., Bathsheba] recounted to him [i.e., David] all that the prophet had suggested” (*Jewish Antiquities* 7.350), “When he [i.e., Jonathan] told them all about Solomon and the decision of King David” (*ibid.*, 7.360). See H. St. J. Thackeray and R. Marcus, *Josephus with an English Translation: Jewish Antiquities Books V–VIII*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press / London: William Heinemann, 1934), pp. 548–549, 552–555.



Figure 4 Coronation of Solomon, Jean Pichore (1503), Paris, Bibliotheque Mazarine Ms. 1581 folio 154.

Solomon the son of David king *a second time* [שנית],⁸ and anointed him to the Lord to be a king [לנגיד].”⁹

The eating and drinking is mentioned only in Chronicles, but most likely it was also part of the celebration according to Kings. The author was interested in stressing Solomon’s anointing, and the rejoicing of the people that expresses their happiness on the occasion. For the Chronicler the important thing is that Solomon was God’s chosen anointed king; other details of the coronation ceremony could be left out as superfluous. Apparently he was unaware of the protocol involved with the coronation of a king in the monarchic period. Chronicles shares with Kings only the cardinal features, that is, the anointing of Solomon and his coronation, which ends with Solomon sitting on the throne. Yet he does note the many

⁸ On the word שנית (“a second time”), see the next section.

⁹ The term נגיד means here “king,” as it appears in the following verse (1 Chr 29:23), and as it was correctly translated in the Septuagint (βασιλέα); see also 1 Chr 11:2 and compare Ps 76:13 where נגיד occurs as a synonym to מלך; compare also 1 Sam 9:16; 10:1; 13:14; 25:30; 2 Sam 6:21; 1 Kgs 1:35; 2 Kgs 20:5; Ezek 28:2.

sacrifices that were performed for the Lord on that important occasion (1 Chr 29:21),¹⁰ which appear also in Kings. For the Chronicler and his Temple community the pious action of sacrifice has a special importance.

II. WERE THERE TWO CORONATIONS?

Only two (other) kings are said to have been anointed as king more than once:

- (a) 1 Samuel 9:27–10:1 narrates that the prophet Samuel anointed Saul privately (10:1). Later, he introduced Saul as a chosen king before the people who were assembled in Mizpah, and the people affirmed loudly “Long live the king!” (10:17–24). However, some people were unimpressed by Saul’s leadership ability (10:27). Therefore, following Saul’s victory over the Ammonites, Samuel assembled the people in Gilgal, and there *all* the people “announced him as king” (11:14–15).
- (b) 1 Samuel 16:1–13 recounts that the prophet Samuel anointed David privately. Following the death of Saul, David was anointed two more times: by Judah (2 Sam 2:4a), and two years later by the northern tribes of Israel (2 Sam 5:1–3). Both times the anointment took place in Hebron.

Were there two coronations of Solomon as well? Based on the Masoretic Text of 1 Chronicles 29:22, “And they made Solomon the son of David king *a second time* [שנית],” some ancient, medieval and modern scholars are of the opinion that this was indeed the case. Josephus Flavius, for instance, affirms that the first coronation of Solomon took place in front of the people of Jerusalem, as detailed in 1 Kings 1 (*Jewish Antiquities* 7:354–358). Later, Josephus follows the description in 1 Chronicles 29:20–25 and describes “the second coronation,” which was in front of the officials of all the Israelite tribes: “And throughout the whole day the king feasted with all people, and *they anointed Solomon with oil a second time and proclaimed him king*” (*Jewish Antiquities* 7:382).¹¹ The same

¹⁰ Note the chiasmic structure that the Chronicler creates at the first part of the verse: ויעלו עליהם / ויזבחו ליהוה זבחים (“they performed **for the Lord** sacrifices / and they offered **burnt offerings for the Lord**”). This literary form is very common in the Chronic writing, see Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History*, pp. 215–231 (compare also pp. 232–274).

¹¹ Thackeray and Marcus, *Jewish Antiquities Books V–VIII*, pp. 350–353, 564–565.

view was held by some medieval Jewish exegetes, such as Pseudo-Rashi and David Kimchi, in their commentaries on 1 Chronicles 29:22.

In modern scholarship, a similar harmonistic approach has been taken by several scholars, who identify the early text in 1 Kings 1 and the later one in 1 Chronicles 29 as two coronations of Solomon. Thus, for example, at the end of the nineteenth century, William E. Barnes asserted: "The first time is described in 1 Kgs 1:39 (Solomon was hastily anointed in order to assert his claim to the throne against his brother Adonijah)."¹² Eight decades later, Benjamin Mazar stated that "In the Bible there are two descriptions of the coronation of Solomon (1 Kgs 1:35-40; 1 Chr 29:22-24), and it became clear that he really was coronated twice."¹³ Saul Zalewski explained the necessity of two coronations as follows: the first one was a private, "quick coronation" which is mentioned in 1 Chronicles 23:1; the second one was public, with great celebration, which is detailed in 1 Chronicles 29:20-25.¹⁴ Hugh G. M. Williamson went in a different direction, concluding that 1 Chronicles 23:1 is merely a literary heading while in 1 Chronicles 29:20-25 "the Chronicler was writing here with 1 Kings 1 in mind"; that is, the "second" coronation in Chronicles was set in contrast to the first one described in 1 Kings 1.¹⁵ However, it is doubtful that the Chronicler, who negated Kings' story about the succession of Solomon and invested much literary effort into reconstructing a different story, would have hinted at Kings in such a way.

Nonetheless, there is no hint of two coronations of Solomon in the early biblical historiography. On the one hand, it is hard to imagine that Solomon was crowned twice and that the author of Solomon's story (or the Deuteronomistic historian) simply omitted one of these events. Why should he omit any of them or specifically the second one? We already saw that ancient Israelite historian(s) note the two coronations of Saul and the three of David without any restriction. On the other hand, why should the Chronicler invent an extra coronation for Solomon? There is no reason to assume that he did. Presumably, the

¹² Barnes, *The Books of Chronicles*, p. 140.

¹³ Mazar, "The Time of David and Solomon," in Malamat (ed.), *The History of the Jewish People: The Age of the Monarchies*, p. 74.

¹⁴ Zalewski, *Solomon's Ascension to the Throne*, pp. 224-225.

¹⁵ Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, p. 187. Williamson does not refer to Josephus, nor to any of the medieval commentaries or modern scholars (except Ariele Bartel). Similarly, Barnes also did not refer to those earlier scholars. On this tendency to ignore older (especially premodern) biblical scholarship, see Kalimi, *The Retelling of Chronicles in Jewish Tradition and Literature*, pp. 6-7.

word שָׁנִית in 1 Chronicles 29:22 is a gloss. In fact, this word does not appear in the Septuagint (B – Vaticanus) and Peshitta.¹⁶ Presumably, the glossator wished to harmonize 1 Chronicles 28–29 (especially 28:1–10; 29:20–25) with 1 Chronicles 23:1, which states that David has made Solomon king over Israel. This reasonable explanation, which is based on the textual variants of Chronicles, has been suggested by several scholars.¹⁷ I would like to strengthen it from a literary viewpoint: 1 Chronicles 23:1 is a general assertion, for which the particular details appear in 1 Chronicles 28–29. Such a literary device of “general – particular” is common in the Chronicler’s historical writing.¹⁸

III. SITTING ON “THE THRONE OF THE LORD”

The Deuteronomistic historian asserts that Solomon sat upon “the *throne of his father David*” (1 Kgs 2:12a, cf. 1:46). The Chronicler, however, presents a unique notion: Solomon did not sit upon an earthly throne, but rather upon “the *throne of the Lord* as king [למלך] instead of David his father” (1 Chr 29:23, an “addition”).¹⁹ This was actually the fulfillment of the divine will, as stated by David: “He chose Solomon to sit on the *throne of kingdom of the Lord* over Israel” (1 Chr 28:5, an “addition”). This notion appears once again – for the third time – in the words that the Chronicler ascribes to the Queen of Sheba: “Blessed be the Lord your God who has delighted in you [i.e., Solomon] to place you *on his* [i.e., God’s] *throne* as king for the Lord your God” (2 Chr 9:8), in contrast to the earlier parallel text in 1 Kings 10:9: “to place you *on the throne of Israel*.” How should this be understood?

Several times in his work, the Chronicler says that the throne belongs to the Lord. In 1 Chronicles 17:14 he writes: “in my [i.e., the Lord’s] house and my kingdom,” instead of: “your [i.e., David’s] house and

¹⁶ The words καὶ ἐβασίλευσαν ἐκ δευτέρου do appear in the some other LXX manuscripts, such as Alexandrinus.

¹⁷ See, for example, Kittel, *Die Bücher der Chronik*, p. 104; Curtis and Madsen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Chronicles*, p. 307; K. Galling, *Die Bücher der Chronik, Esra, Nehemia: Übersetzt und erklärt*, Das Alte Testament Deutsch 12 (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1954), p. 77; P. B. Dirksen, *1 Chronicles*, Historical Commentary on the Old Testament (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), p. 352; Klein, *1 Chronicles*, pp. 530, 541.

¹⁸ See Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History*, pp. 369–380. esp. pp. 369–377.

¹⁹ Attempting to avoid personification of the Lord, the Greek translator “corrected” the text and wrote as in 1 Kgs 2:12a: “and Solomon sat upon the throne of his father David.”

kingdom” as in the parallel text in 2 Samuel 7:16.²⁰ According to 1 Chronicles 29:11 (an “addition”), David states in his prayer “for yours [i.e., the Lord’s] is the kingdom.” Yet, because the kingdom and the throne (and the land, Lev 25:23) belong to the Lord, he puts on it whomever he chooses. In this case, he chose Solomon to sit on it. Indeed, 2 Chronicles 13:8 (an “addition”) considers the kingdom of Judah to be “*the kingdom of the Lord* in the hand of David’s descendants” (ממלכת יהוה ביד בני דויד). Now it is clear: If Judah is “*the kingdom of the Lord*,” the throne of that kingdom is the “*throne of (the kingdom of) the Lord*.”²¹ Thus, the earthly king – Solomon – is the representative of the heavenly king – the Lord – on earth. He connects the Lord and his people, Israel, and represents the latter before the former. In Chronicles, therefore, theocracy and monarchy are interconnected.²² This idea is not unique to Chronicles. It is well known already from the pre-Chronicist “biblical” writings (e.g., Judg 8:22–23; 1 Sam 8:4–22; Hos 3:5; Ezek 20:33 and 37:22–25; Isa 41:21; 43:15; 44:6; 52:7; Ps 98:6), and the Chronicler most likely was aware of this. He just expressed the old concept in bold statements. Since the motif of the Lord’s kingship appears in various early and late scriptures, the common opinion among biblical scholars, as stated, for instance, by C. R. North, that “the doctrine of kingship of Yahweh, in any pronounced form, was a comparatively late development,”²³ is very questionable.

²⁰ Thus the Chronicler moved the focus from the house and kingdom of David to the house and kingdom of the Lord, because in his time the kingdom of David did not exist anymore, but the house of the Lord (i.e., the Second Temple) and his kingdom would endure forever. The Chronicler did not interpret 2 Sam 7:16 as something that would be fulfilled in the future.

²¹ Interestingly, Jer 3:17 states that in the future people will call Jerusalem כסא יהוה “throne of the Lord.”

²² On these texts and how they deliberately link Solomon particularly, and the Davidic monarchy generally, to the Lord’s supremacy, see also M. Lynch, *Monotheism and Institutions in the Book of Chronicles: Temple, Priesthood, and Kingship in Post-Exilic Perspective*, Studies of the Sofja Kovalevskaja Research Group on Early Jewish Monotheism 1, Forschungen zum Alten Testament 2/64, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), pp. 209–260, esp. pp. 209–211 and 237–241.

²³ See C. R. North, “The Religious Aspects of Hebrew Kingship,” *ZAW* 9 (1932), pp. 8–38, esp. p. 28; see also G. Wilda, *Das Königsbild des Chronistischen Geschichtswerkes* (Dissertation, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, 1959), p. 32; N. Poulssen, *König und Tempel im Glaubenszeugnis des Alten Testaments*, Stuttgarter Biblische Monographien 3 (Stuttgart: Katholische Bibelwerk, 1967), pp. 167–182, esp. pp. 170, 172.

IV. SOLOMON'S ESTABLISHMENT: THE CONCLUDING WORDS

After the descriptions of the elimination and removal of Solomon's rivals (1 Kgs 2:13–46a: Adonijah in vv. 13–25, Abiathar in vv. 26–27, Joab in vv. 28–35, and Shimei in vv. 36–46a), the Deuteronomistic historian concludes the Succession Narrative as follows: “*And the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon*” (והממלכה נכונה בידי שלמה) (1 Kgs 2:46b).²⁴ Similar words (probably from the same hand) also appear after the end of David's kingship and the rise of Solomon in 1 Kings 2:12: “*And Solomon sat on the throne of David his father, and his kingdom was firmly established*” (ושלמה ישב על כסא דוד אביו ותכן מלכותו מאד). Thus, the account in 1 Kings 2:13–46a is framed by an *inclusio*, which opens with the words ותכן מלכותו מאד (1 Kgs 2:12b), and it ends similarly with והממלכה נכונה בידי שלמה (1 Kgs 2:46b).²⁵ Accordingly, the decision of August Klostermann to end the section with 1 Kings 3:2 is arbitrary and unacceptable.²⁶

The parallel conclusion in the Chronistic history is much stronger. Here the closing words to Solomon's succession come immediately after the peaceful coronation: “The Lord exalted Solomon highly [ויגדל יהוה את שלמה למעלה] in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him royal majesty such as *no king in Israel had before him*” (1 Chr 29:25).²⁷ Solomon is firmly established as king, and this is in fact the

²⁴ Thus the “stability of the Davidic dynasty is purchased at the price of blood and tears”; see Mulder, *1 Kings 1–11*, p. 86.

²⁵ *Contra* Veijola, *Die ewige Dynastie*, p. 23, who considers 1 Kgs 2:12 to be a post-Deuteronomistic addition from the postexilic period. Indeed, the word מלכותו is an abstraction that usually appears in late biblical texts; see A. Hurvitz, *Transition Period in Biblical Hebrew: A Study in Postexilic Hebrew and Its Implications for the Dating of Psalms* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1972), pp. 80–83. Nonetheless, its occurrence in 1 Kgs 2:12 could easily be explained as a scribal corruption of ממלכתו by a later copyist. Veijola's observation that 2:12 does not follow the usual Deuteronomistic phrasing could as well imply that it is pre-Deuteronomistic as that it is post-Deuteronomistic.

For the use of the *inclusio* in biblical literature in general and in the book of Chronicles in particular, see Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History*, pp. 295–324. In any case, 2:46b is not a *Wiederaufnahme* (“resumptive repetition”) as Cogan suggests (1 Kings, p. 180). Rather, it is the second wing of the *inclusio* that – as he correctly states – “brackets the stories of the king's political rivals.” For the definition of *Wiederaufnahme*, see Kalimi, *ibid.*, pp. 275–276 (and several examples on pp. 276–289).

²⁶ See Klostermann, *Die Bücher Samuelis und der Könige*, p. 269.

²⁷ The opening verse in 2 Chr 1:1, ויתחזק שלמה בן דוד על מלכותו ויהוה אלהיו עמו ויגדלהו למעלה, creates a resumptive repetition (*Wiederaufnahme*) with 1 Chr 29:25, ויגדל יהוה את שלמה למעלה, because of the intervening words of 1 Chr 29:26–28 (which is based on 1 Kgs 2:11–12a); see in detail Kalimi, *Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History*, pp. 285–287. Indeed, as David

fulfillment of a divine blessing (cf. 2 Chr 1:12b). This is more meaningful than the people's blessing in 1 Kings 1:37, 47. Nonetheless, in contrast to the opinion of some medieval and modern scholars,²⁸ the words under review do not allude to Solomon's struggle with Adonijah, Joab, and the rest, a story the Chronicler did not wish to recount in his work.

V. "DAVID'S TESTAMENT"

I. 1 Kings 2:1-9

Following the introductory words in 1 Kings 2:1, David's deathbed command to Solomon (usually called David's Testament, 1 Kgs 2:2-9) contains two essential elements: (a) One is *political* in nature (2:5-9), stating David's requests to punish Joab, the son of Zeroiah (2:5-6), and Shimei, the son of Gera (2:8-9), for evil deeds they had committed many years ago, and to reward the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite for their father's kindness towards David at the time he escaped from Absalom (2:7). (b) The other, *religious* in nature (2:2-4), refers to Solomon's future spiritual behavior in order to guarantee the Lord's benefits. Let us turn to these elements:

- (a) The *political* element of the Testament has two aspects: a historical and a literary. From the literary viewpoint, it functions as a paradigm showing that loyalty and kindness towards the king will be rewarded (as in the case of Barzillai, 2 Sam 17:27-29; 19:32-40 [ET, 19:31-39]); and, vice versa, that hostile behavior (as in the case of Shimei, 2 Sam 16:5-13; 19:19-24 [ET, 19:18-23]), and committing evil will be punished (as did Joab by killing Abner and Amasa, against David's will, 2 Sam 3:26-30; 20:8-10).²⁹

expressed in his prayer, it is in the power of the Lord לְהַגְדִּיל וּלְחַזֵּק לְכָל "it is in your power [lit., hand] to *exalt* and *give strength* to all" (1 Chr 29:12; the Chronicler referred to these words in 2 Chr 1:1 in chiasmic order).

²⁸ See, for example, Gersonides (Rabbi Levi ben Gershon) in his commentary on 1 Chr 29:22; J. M. Myers, *II Chronicles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 13 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965), p. 5; Zalewski, *Solomon's Ascension to the Throne*, p. 229.

²⁹ Interestingly, the killing of Absalom by Joab (2 Sam 18:9-15), which was against the clear order of David (2 Sam 18:5, 12; 19:1-5 [ET, 18:33-19:4]), is not mentioned here. Obviously, in the case of Absalom one cannot say that Joab killed a righteous and good man, as were Abner and Amasa (2 Sam 2:32). After all, Absalom murdered his brother and rebelled against his father.

From the historical point of view, it seems rather implausible that the last thoughts and words of the aged, weak, and sick David on his deathbed (1 Kgs 1:1–4) were to seek revenge on his nephew and lifelong loyal chief commander, Joab, for deeds he had committed many years ago.³⁰ The same is true for the powerless Shimei, who had cursed him some years before, when David fled from Absalom, but who no longer endangered the kingdom.³¹

James A. Montgomery and Henry S. Gehman claim that, according to the standards of that time, David instructed Solomon appropriately on the responsibilities of the king “to remove the blood-guilt [see 1 Kgs 2:31], according to the ancient principle of ‘life for life’ (Ex[od] 21:24), a principle that David had followed in visiting upon Saul’s grandchildren his murder of the Gibeonites (2 Sam 21).”³² Regarding Shimei, they write, “the curse against ‘a prince’ was high crime; cf. [1 Kgs] 21:9ff.; Ex[od] 22:27.”³³ Therefore, they claim that the way David is said to deal with Joab and Shimei would have sounded reliable, and should be seen as authentically derived from David himself.

However, the Testament regarding Shimei puts David in an awful light: After he had forgiven him and sworn in God’s name that he would not kill him, he now looks for revenge that will be carried out by his son Solomon. Such a desire for vengeance appears to be contrary to David’s nature. David is described in the book of Samuel as a merciful rather than a vengeful person. Despite giving in to the Gibeonites’ demand for vengeance on seven of Saul’s grandsons (2 Sam 21:1–14), still “David was merciful to Mephibosheth” and spared him (21:7). David had also previously spared Saul’s life several times (1 Sam 24:4–20; 26:3–25), despite the repeated efforts of the latter to kill him (1 Sam 18:10–11, 17–29; 19:1–24:3; 26:1–2). He tried to protect his son Absalom (2 Sam 18:5, 12, 29, 32; 19:1), although the latter murdered his son Amnon, revolted against him, and slept with his concubines (2 Sam 13:23–39; 15:7–17:29).³⁴ Therefore, it would be out of

³⁰ The murder of Abner son of Ner took place thirty-eight years earlier, just before the unification of the northern and southern kingdoms (2 Sam 2:23–3:39). The murder of Amasa son of Jether happened after the failure of Absalom’s rebellion (2 Sam 20:8–10). In both cases Joab wished to protect his top position as the chief commander of the army.

³¹ Contra Gray (*I & II Kings*, pp. 98–99), who is convinced that “David might well have given Solomon the charge to eliminate Shimei.”

³² Montgomery and Gehman, *The Books of Kings*, pp. 89–90.

³³ Montgomery and Gehman, *The Books of Kings*, p. 90.

³⁴ This would also be a clear transgression of the Israelites’ fundamental ethical principle reflected in several places in the Hebrew Bible: “You shall not hate your brother in your heart . . . You shall not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people,

character for David's last wishes to involve vengeance, particularly for actions that lay well in the past. In addition, though we have no solid indication of David's thoughts on his deathbed, still it seems unlikely that they would be with Barzillai's sons rather than with his own children and close family, as in the cases of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen 24:1-9; 27:1-28:5; 49).

Except for the historiographer's summary of David's kingship (1 Kgs 2:10-12),³⁵ the following paragraph (2:13-46a)³⁶ deals with Solomon's struggle with his rival Adonijah and his supporters. It recounts a series of executions (of Adonijah, Joab, and Shimei) and the removal of Abiathar from the Jerusalem priesthood, all ordered by Solomon. The Testament, therefore, is not an apology for things that had happened long ago, but rather aims at the *current political* situation: It explains and legitimates – at least in regard to Joab and Shimei – Solomon's use of force to maintain power and achieve complete control over the kingdom. In fact, the narrator points out this political aspect when noting: "For Joab had supported Adonijah although he had not supported Absalom" (2:28). Solomon himself, however, links the execution of Joab to events of the past (2:31-33) as stated in David's Testament (2:5-6), as if to say that he fulfilled his father's orders (see also regarding Shimei, 2:44, and cf. 2:8-9).

Timo Veijola considers 1 Kings 2:31b-33 to be a late, secondary addition, because it alludes to 2:5-9, which (as part of 2:1-12) he also considers a late, Deuteronomistic addition.³⁷ But rather than arguing for this, he simply states, "It is so evident, that it no longer requires any demonstration."³⁸ He refers among others to Hugo Greßmann, but

but you shall love your fellow as yourself" (Lev 19:17-18; see also Prov 24:29; cf. 20:22). Indeed, many decades later, the officials of the Aramean king, Ben-Hadad II, declare: "Look, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings" (1 Kgs 20:31).

³⁵ In fact, this summary is very similar to the one in 2 Sam 5:4-5. The two summaries form an *inclusio* to David's kingship over Israel and Judah. Despite some differences between the summaries, most likely they are from one and the same editor – the Deuteronomist – who wished to construct the history of David as a king over Israel and Judah as a unit which starts and ends similarly. Contra DeVries (1 Kings, p. 30), who is not aware of the literary device in the text and, therefore, attributes the summaries in Kings to "different redactors."

³⁶ As already mentioned (§IV), 1 Kgs 2:12b and 2:46b form an *inclusio* around 2:13-46a.

³⁷ Veijola, *Die ewige Dynastie*, pp. 19-20, 23.

³⁸ "Dass V. 5-9 und in seinen Pendants V. 31b-33.44-45 sekundäre Auffüllungen vorliegen, ist so evident, dass es eigentlich keiner Beweisführung mehr bedürfte," Veijola, *Die ewige Dynastie*, p. 19, where he also appeals to Greßmann, F. Mildenberger, Würthwein, and O. Eissfeldt (p. 19, note 17).

the latter also merely asserts that 1 Kings 2:1–12 (including 2:5–9), and 3:1b–33, 44–45 are *all* late additions in the style of Deuteronomy.³⁹ This claim is problematic, because neither 2:5–9 nor 2:31b–33 includes any distinctive Deuteronomistic language. Even Ernst Würthwein (to whom Veijola also appeals) agrees that there are no Deuteronomic elements in 2:5–9.⁴⁰ Indeed, there is no particular reason to assume that either 2:5–9 or 2:31b–33 must be late or Deuteronomistic. On the contrary, the story makes more sense as an apologetic composed near the beginning of Solomon's reign rather than several centuries later. As Montgomery and Gehman correctly point out: "Why a much later age (Deuteronomic) should have invented the story to save Solomon's virtue by throwing the odium upon David is unintelligible in view of the latter's canonization."⁴¹

However, while Montgomery and Gehman therefore consider the Testament authentic to David, this seems unlikely for the reasons mentioned earlier. The need to justify the deaths of Solomon's opponents as recounted in 1 Kings 2 points instead to its likely composition as a cover story in Solomon's court, written after the death of David but ascribed to him. That is, it attempts to legitimize Solomon's actions to solidify his kingship through the executions of his rivals, and to represent him as one who merely fulfilled his father's will. Thus, 1 Kings 2:5–9 is an essential part of the original text of the Succession Narrative,⁴² serving the same purpose as the rest of this source: to justify Solomon's unconventional ascension to the throne.

In addition, the narrative illustrates that Solomon's opponents "had behaved in a manner that led to their own doom."⁴³ Otherwise, the slaying would have been considered unnecessary and would have cast a dark shadow on the beginning of Solomon's reign.⁴⁴ In order to balance this element of vengeance in the Testament and make it sound as reliable as possible, a positive feature has been included as well – the rewarding of Barzillai's sons.⁴⁵ That is to say, David remembered not only the wicked

³⁹ "ein jüngerer Zusatz im Stil des Deuteronomiums (i.e., V. Mose)"; see Greßmann, *Die älteste Geschichtsschreibung und Prophetie Israels*, p. 191.

⁴⁰ See Würthwein, *Das erste Buch Könige. Kapitel 1–16*, p. 20.

⁴¹ Montgomery and Gehman, *The Books of Kings*, p. 88.

⁴² Cf. Montgomery and Gehman, *The Books of Kings*, p. 87; Gray, *I & II Kings*, pp. 15–16; contra Mulder (1 Kings 1–11, p. 86) who notes: "the section of vv. 1b–9 has been added to the story from another source."

⁴³ Cogan, *1 Kings*, p. 180.

⁴⁴ Contra Benzinger, *Die Bücher der Könige*, p. 8, who argues "für späten Ursprung."

⁴⁵ Contra Knapp (*Royal Apologetic in the Ancient Near East*, pp. 272–273; following Halpern, *David's Secret Demons*, p. 302), who claims that Barzillai's sons were

men but also the kind ones.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, there is no clue in the sources as to whether or not Solomon kept this part of the Testament.

The way David is said in the Testament to have dealt with Joab and Shimei would sound reliable in the cultural and religious context of Solomon's time.⁴⁷ Yet two of those eliminated by Solomon in 1 Kings 2 are not mentioned in David's Testament: Adonijah and Abiathar. Why were these not also included, if the Testament was composed in Solomon's court?

In light of the great love of David for his children, he could not be presented as the one who had ordered the elimination of his son Adonijah (who, in fact, had not rebelled against him). Even in the case of Absalom, who murdered Amnon, rebelled against his father, and slept with his concubines, David attempted to save him: "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom" (2 Sam 18:5, cf. 12). And when he was killed by Joab (2 Sam 18:14-15), it is said that David mourned him bitterly (2 Sam 19:1-2, 5 [ET, 18:33-19:1, 4]). Therefore, it would not have been convincing for the author of the Succession Narrative to attribute to David a demand that Adonijah be killed. Further, there was no reason to make such a claim, since a more compelling explanation for Adonijah's execution was already available: his request to have David's nurse/concubine Abishag as a wife. This was by no means naïve, but surely reflects the common practice in which a new king would take the concubines of his predecessor (as Absalom did in 2 Sam 16:21-22).

actually being held hostage at the king's court. This is a speculative conclusion based primarily on the claimed equation between "Barzillai the Gileadite" who helped David as he fled from Absalom (2 Sam 17:29; 19:32-40 [ET, 19:31-39]), and "Barzillai the Meholathite" in 2 Sam 21:8, whose grandsons were said to have been handed over by David to the Gibeonites for execution. However, there is no hint in the text of 1 Kgs 2 that the sons of "Barzillai the Gileadite" are hostages. Further, the latter was from Rogelim in the mountainous region of Gilead, while Barzillai the Meholathite was probably from Abel-Meholah, which is located west of the Jordan River valley, *not* in Gilead (cf. Judg 7:22; 1 Kgs 4:12; see D. V. Edelman, "Abel-Meholah," in D. N. Freedman et al. [eds.], *Anchor Bible Dictionary* [New York: Doubleday, 1992], vol. 1, pp. 11-12; contra Halpern, *ibid.*, p. 302; Knapp, *ibid.*, p. 272, note 64, who asserts that "Abel-Meholah lay within the region of Gilead").

⁴⁶ Contra Gray (*I & II Kings*, p. 102), who is of the opinion that "the provision for the sons of Barzillai may well have been made by David." Montgomery and Gehman's (*The Books of Kings*, p. 90) citations from biblical and extrabiblical sources regarding the importance of eating at the king's table "as a method of pensioning," still do not prove that the verse "has been made by David."

⁴⁷ See the behavior of David after the death of Abner and his complaint regarding the sons of Zeruiah in 2 Sam 3:31-39; and also Montgomery and Gehman, *The Books of Kings*, pp. 89-90.

The expulsion of Abiathar from the Jerusalem priesthood is justified by Solomon as follows: “Go to Anathoth, to your estate; *for you deserve death.*” Solomon does not say why Abiathar deserves death, though the actual reason is surely because he supported Adonijah. But this order could not be attributed to David, as Solomon himself states, “because you bore the ark of the Lord God before David my father, and because you shared in all the affliction of my father” (2:26). Later, the Deuteronomistic historian adds here: “fulfilling the word of the Lord, which he spoke concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh” (1 Kgs 2:27b), that is, the prophecies in 1 Samuel 2:35–36; 3:12–13.⁴⁸ This demonstrates the fulfillment of God’s word, as did 1 Kings 2:24 regarding the fulfillment of Nathan’s prophecy to David in 2 Samuel 7:11b–12.

(b) The *religious* element of the Testament regarding Solomon’s future behavior (1 Kgs 2:2–4), is, without doubt, a composition from the hand of the Deuteronomistic historian:⁴⁹

(1) It contains several expressions that are characteristic of Deuteronomistic phraseology. Thus, 2:2a: אָנֹכִי הֵלֵךְ בְּדֶרֶךְ כָּל הָאָרֶץ (“I am going in the way of all the earth”), is almost identical with Joshua 23:14a. Similarly, 2:2b, וְהָיִיתָ לְאִישׁ חֲזָק וְהִצַּגְתָּ לְפָנָיו אִישׁ חֲזָק (“be strong and show yourself a [courageous] man”), is comparable with the plural expression in 1 Samuel 4:9a, וְהָיָה לְאִישִׁים חֲזָקִים (cf. also Deut 3:123; Josh 1:6a, 7a, 9a, 18b: חֲזָק וְאָמַץ). Verse 2:3: וְשָׁמַרְתָּ אֶת מִשְׁמַרְתּוֹ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֵלֶכֶת בְּדַרְכֵּי לְשֹׁמֵר חֻקֵּי מִצְוֹתָיו וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו וְעֻדּוֹתָיו (“Keep the mandate of the Lord your God, following his

⁴⁸ In fact, this phenomenon is common in the Deuteronomistic history. For further examples, see 1 Kgs 12:15 (fulfillment of the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite); 2 Kgs 10:10, 17 (fulfillment of the prophecy of Elijah regarding the House of Ahab); 2 Kgs 9:36–37 (the prophecy of Elijah regarding Jezebel); Josh 6:26 in comparison with 1 Kgs 16:34 (concerning the building of Jericho); 1 Kgs 13:1–2, 29–32 with 2 Kgs 23:16–18 (concerning the prophecy of the prophet from Judah regarding the destruction of the temple at Bethel). See also the discussion by G. von Rad, “The Deuteronomistic Theology of History in the Book of Kings,” *Studies in Deuteronomy* (London: SCM, 1953), pp. 74–91. This method of *vaticinium ex eventu* (“prophecy post event”) is also known from an inscription of Aššurbanipal, king of Assyria; see Tadmor, “Autobiographical Apology in the Assyrian Royal Literature,” pp. 50–51.

⁴⁹ Against Benzinger, *Die Bücher der Könige*, p. 8, who argues that 1 Kgs 2:2–4 is “surely post-deuteronomistic”; similarly, Veijola, *Die ewige Dynastie*, pp. 22, 24–26. If we have Deuteronomistic language and idioms in these verses (as will be shown), why should they be considered as *post*-Deuteronomistic, and not simply “Deuteronomistic”? Nonetheless, that these verses come from the Deuteronomistic historian is generally accepted; see for instance, Gray, *I & II Kings*, pp. 99–100.

ways, keeping his statutes, his commandments, and his laws, and his testimonies”), is a variant of the stereotypical expression in Deuteronomy 4:6; 7:12; 11:1; 16:12; 23:24 (ET, 23:23); 24:8; 26:16; 28:13; 29:8; cf. Joshua 22:3, 5. For the idiom “as written in the Torah of Moses,” cf. Joshua 1:8; 2 Kings 22:8a. The phrases in 1 Kgs 2:4b: אם ישמרו בניך את דרכם: “if your sons watch their way to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, then no one of your line shall be cut off from the throne of Israel”), are very common in the book of Deuteronomy (4:29; 6:5; 10:12; 11:13; 13:4; 26:16; 30:2, 6, 14) and in Deuteronomistic literature (e.g., 1 Kgs 8:25; 9:5–7). In addition, the phrase in 2:4a: למען יקים יהוה את דברו (“that the Lord may establish his word”), which is parallel with 1 Samuel 1:23b: אך יקים יהוה את דברו, is similar to an idiom that appears in several places in the Hebrew Bible, Deuteronomistic as well as non-Deuteronomistic texts.⁵⁰

- (2) That this part of the Testament comes from the Deuteronomistic historian is clear also from the *conditional* sentence in 1 Kings 2:4b, “If your children keep to their way, to walk before me in truth . . . there shall not fail you a man on the throne of Israel.” As one who wrote/edited in the exilic period (ca. 550 BCE) and knew about the fall of the Davidic kingdom, he conditioned the existence of the dynasty upon keeping the Lord’s commandments. In contrast, in Nathan’s prophecy, which was most probably composed in the Solomonic period,⁵¹ the existence of the Davidic dynasty is absolute, *unconditional*: “But my mercy *shall not depart from him*, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before you. And *your*

⁵⁰ See, for example, Deut 9:5c; 1 Kgs 8:20a; 12:15c. In non-Deuteronomistic literature, see for example, Num 23:19; 1 Sam 1:23; 3:12; 2 Sam 7:25; 1 Kgs 6:12 (priestly passage). Weinfeld notes that in the Deuteronomic literature the phrase יהוה הקים appears “always in connection with the fulfilment of a divine promise of a national nature”; see Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, p. 350.

⁵¹ See Ishida, *History and Historical Writing in Ancient Israel*, pp. 137–150, esp. p. 149: “The narrative of Nathan’s prophecy is a composition to give an interpretation of the course of history concerning the establishment of Solomon’s kingship linking with the building of [the] Jerusalem Temple from [a] Solomonic point of view, although, on the surface, David was the person to whom the prophecy was delivered.”

*house and your kingdom shall be established forever
before me;*⁵² *your throne shall be established forever*”
(2 Sam 7:15–16).

Most likely, for the Deuteronomistic historian it was improper that David’s Testament included only secular – political – messages, and lacked religious ones. Therefore, he attempted to soften the harsh Testament (that he probably found in the Succession Narrative which was included in “the book of the acts of Solomon,” 1 Kgs 11:41) by adding to David’s words a religious value as well. In fact, the phenomenon of a later historian composing a speech (or a prayer or letter) and attributing it to an earlier leader, particularly to one shortly before his death, is well known from various places in the Deuteronomistic and Chronistic histories, and is attested also in Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman historiography.⁵³

To *sum up*, “David’s Testament” in 1 Kings 2:2–9 contains two essential elements: One is *political* in nature (2:5–9) regarding the elimination of Joab and Shimei for past crimes, and to reward the sons of Barzillai for their father’s kindness towards David. This portion of the Testament contains no Deuteronomistic or other late elements, and could have been written in Solomon’s court in order to justify his elimination of his rivals. The reward to Barzillai’s sons intended to show the moral balance of David, who commanded not only the punishment of wicked men, but also the rewarding of good ones. The other element of the Testament is *religious* in nature (2:2–4), referring to Solomon’s future religious behavior, and was added by the Deuteronomistic historian in order to reframe David’s final words in terms of religious commitment.

2. *The Chronistic History*

Most likely, the Chronicler’s *Vorlage* contained a complete version of David’s Testament, as it appears in 1 Kings 2:1–9. As elsewhere, the Chronicler would not have distinguished between the early and late phases of the passage. Nonetheless, Chronicles omits all of David’s

⁵² In לפניך (“before you”), ך is a dittography of ך from the first letter of the next word: כִּסֵּאךְ (“your throne”).

⁵³ See, for example, Deut 31:24–32:47 (in fact, the whole of Deuteronomy is presented as one long speech by Moses, just before his death); Josh 23 and 24:1–28; 1 Sam 12; see also Judg 2:1–5, and 2 Kgs 17:7–23; 1 Chr 22:7–19; 28:2–29:20; 2 Chr 13:4–12. See Kalimi, “Placing the Chronicler in His Own Historical Context,” pp. 179–192.

commands concerning Joab, Shimei, and the sons of Barzillai, and remains silent about the execution of Adonijah, Joab, and Shimei, as well as the removal of Abiathar from the priesthood. Undoubtedly, the idea that David ended his life in vengeance, as presented in Kings, was considered by the Chronicler to be improbable and unacceptable. Instead, he presents Solomon as the one chosen to be king by the Lord, with the full support of David and all his sons – implicitly including Adonijah (and his supporters), though he is not mentioned by name – as well as of all the king’s officials, the mighty men, and all Israel. Thus, for the Chronicler Solomon had no rivals to kill or take revenge on: He did not execute anyone, and surely not as his first royal act. Since the Chronicler omits the story of 1 Kings 1 from his work, he also omits what follows in 1 Kings 2 (except for the main content of 1 Kgs 2:2–4).

Regardless of whether David indeed ordered the Testament or not, including the stories from 1 Kings 2 would have undermined the Chronicler’s concept of Solomon’s having been chosen as the Temple builder because he is a man of rest/peace (אִישׁ מְנוּחָה) without any blood stain: 1 Chronicles 22:7–10 and 28:3 affirm that God told David, “You are not to build a house for my name, because you are a warrior and *have shed blood*.”⁵⁴ The second chapter of 1 Kings indicates clearly that Solomon shed blood (regardless whether it was justified or not), even upon the sacred altar in the Tent of the Lord (1 Kgs 2:28–34).⁵⁵ This would contradict the Chronicler’s principal concept of who was allowed to be the Temple builder (Solomon) and who was not (David); thus he would

⁵⁴ On this issue see also P. B. Dirksen, “Why Was David Disqualified as Temple Builder? The Meaning of 1 Chronicles 22.8,” *JSOT* 70 (1996), pp. 51–56.

⁵⁵ Obviously, Joab – as well as Adonijah (1 Kgs 1:50–53) – looked for political asylum by escaping to the holy tent and holding the horns of the altar. However, while there is no evidence that Adonijah had murdered anyone, the case of Joab involved blood-guilt, although it took place in the distant past (1 Kgs 2:5–6, 31–33). Most likely the case of Adonijah does not relate to criminal law in Exod 21:12–14: “He who strikes a man, so that he dies, shall be surely put to death . . . if a man comes willfully upon his neighbor, to slay him treacherously; you shall take him from my altar, that he may die.” In contrast, it could be that Joab’s execution is linked with that law. For other scholarly views regarding the relation between these cases and Exod 21:14, see the detailed survey by J. Burnside, “Flight of the Fugitives: Rethinking the Relationship between Biblical Law (Exodus 21:12–14) and the Davidic Succession Narrative (1 Kings 1–2),” *JBL* 129 (2010), pp. 418–431. Nevertheless, Solomon’s killing of Joab in the Tent of the Lord is in contrast to the act of the Jehoiada the high priest who was ordered not to kill the wicked Queen Athaliah in the House of the Lord, where she had sought asylum (2 Kgs 11:15–16 // 2 Chr 23:14–15). On the other hand, King Joash of Judah did order the high priest and Prophet Zechariah to be stoned in the Temple’s courtyard (2 Chr 24:20–22, an “addition”).

1 Kings 2:2b–4	1 Chronicles 22:10c–13
וחזקת והיית לאיש. ושמרת את משמרת יהוה אלהיך ללכת בדרכיו לשמר חקתיו מצותיו ומשפטיו ועדותיו <u>ככתוב בתורת משה למען תשכיל את כלי־אשר</u> תעשה... אם ישמרו בניך את דרכם ללכת לפני באמת בכל לבבם ובכל־נפשם לאמר לא יכרת לך איש מעל כסא ישראל	והכנינתי כסא מלכותו על ישראל עד עולם ... אך יתן לך יהוה שכל ובינה ויצוץ על ישראל ולשמור את תורת יהוה אלהיך. או תצליח אם תשמור לעשות את החקים ואת המשפטים אשר צוה יהוה את משה על־ישראל חזק ואמץ אל־תירא ואל תחת
Be strong and be a man; and keep the charge of the Lord your God, to walk in his ways, <u>to keep his</u> <u>statutes, and his commandments,</u> <u>and his judgments, and his</u> <u>testimonies,</u> <u>as it is written in the Torah of Moses,</u> that you may succeed in all that you do, and wherever you turn yourself... If your children keep to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, he said there shall not fail you a man on the throne of Israel.	And I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever . . . Only may the Lord give you wisdom and understanding, when he gives you charge concerning Israel, that you may keep the Torah of the Lord your God. Then shall you prosper,^a if you keep to do the statutes and judgments which the Lord commanded Moses for Israel;^b be strong, and of good courage; do not fear, nor be dismayed.

^a Compare Josh 1:8. According to the Chronicler, the capability for keeping God's laws is a blessing in itself, and is comparable to God's blessing of wisdom and ruling; see Rudolph, *Chronikbücher*, p. 150, note 1. Moreover, in his prayer David asks the Lord to help his people and his son Solomon to keep the Lord's commandments (1 Chr 29:18–19).

^b Compare Deut 17:18–19.

have omitted these texts.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the Chronicler retains the religious and spiritual commands of David to his son to keep God's law. In fact, the wording in 1 Chronicles 22:11c–13 (cf. 1 Chr 28:9–10, 20)⁵⁷ reflects that of 1 Kings 2:2b–4, as seen in the table above.

⁵⁶ For the same reason the Chronicler uses an uncommon, even vague, phrase to refer to Solomon's siege of Hamath-Zobah: וילך שלמה חמת צובה ויחזק עליה ("And Solomon went to Hamath-Zobah, and prevailed against it;" 2 Chr 8:3 – an "addition" to 1 Kgs 9:18). The historicity of this action attributed to Solomon is very doubtful. In the early biblical historical books Hamath and Zobah are two separate places (2 Sam 8:3 [// 1 Chr 18:3]; 1 Kgs 8:65 [// 2 Chr 7:8]). Probably in the Persian period Zobah included the province of Hamath; cf. Rudolph, *Chronikbücher*, p. 219 (and references there to W. F. Albright and M. Noth).

⁵⁷ Although the natural continuation of 1 Chr 22:11 ("Now my son, may the Lord be with you so that you will succeed and will build the house of the Lord") seems to be verse 14

All in all, there is something of David's Testament from 1 Kings 2 that is reflected in Chronicles. Here, however, the Testament (1 Chr 22:5–19) is mentioned prior to Solomon's enthronement (1 Chr 23:1; 29:20–24), and contains only positive and constructive features: (a) the aged father's spiritual and religious commands, guidance, and encouragement of his young son; and (b) a request to build the desired Temple to the Lord (1 Chr 22:2–19; 28:10–29:5), which is not mentioned at all in the version of David's Testament in 1 Kings 2:1–9.⁵⁸ According to Chronicles David also handed to Solomon all the Temple's personnel divisions that he had prepared (divisions of priests, Levites, gatekeepers, and singers), and the architectural plans, as well as the enormous amount of material that he had gathered for that task, in order to assist his young son to carry out the plan: "Now, my son, the Lord be with you; and prosper you, and build the house of the Lord your God, *as he has said of you*" (1 Chr 22:11). And once again, in more detail, in 1 Chronicles 28:10–19: "Take notice now; for the Lord has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary; be strong, and do it. Then David gave to Solomon his son the plans of the vestibule, and of its houses, and of its treasuries, and of its upper chambers . . . All this [he said] is put in writing by the hand of the Lord who instructed me, all the works of this plan."⁵⁹

VI. THE FULFILLMENT OF DAVID'S TESTAMENT: THE FIRST ACTIONS OF KING SOLOMON

Kings and Chronicles both present Solomon as one who completely fulfilled his father's Testament as his first act as king. In Kings this consists

("And behold, in my affliction I have prepared for the house of the Lord"), there is no need to consider vv. 12–13 as a late addition. The Chronicler himself could add these verses as a *post scriptum*. After all, Solomon's wisdom and his building of the Temple are linked together in the Deuteronomistic history as well as in the Chronicist history; see, for instance, 1 Kgs 5:9–32, esp. 5:9–19, 26–28 [ET, 4:29–5:18, esp. 4:29–5:5, 12–14]; 2 Chr 2:2–11 [ET, 2:3–12]. Moreover, the Chronicler repeats the content and the wording of 1 Chr 22:13b in 1 Chr 28:20a. Contra Mosis, *Untersuchungen zur Theologie des chronistischen Geschichtswerkes*, pp. 90–91; E. M. Dörrfuss, *Mose in den Chronikbüchern: Garant theokratischer Zukunftserwartung*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 219 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1994), pp. 155–159. For some other syntactical and content-related difficulties in these verses and their possible interpretation, see Dirksen, 1 *Chronicles*, pp. 267–268.

⁵⁸ See also Chapter Thirteen, §II.

⁵⁹ Compare Exod 25:9, 40; 26:30 regarding the Tabernacle.

of executing his major opponents or removing them from power (1 Kgs 2:13–46). Following these actions, which were meant to protect his reign from inside, Solomon strengthened relations with an important external power, Egypt: he engaged in a political marriage with the daughter of Pharaoh and brought her to the City of David (1 Kgs 3:1–2).⁶⁰ After these actions Solomon visited the holy place in Gibeon, sacrificed to God, and sought divine revelation (1 Kgs 3:3–15). In fact, he only started building the Temple four years after he had taken the throne (1 Kgs 6:37–38).

According to Chronicles, however, Solomon first visited the holy place of Gibeon, sacrificing to God and seeking revelation (2 Chr 1:1–13). Indeed, since “the Lord exalted Solomon highly in the sight of *all Israel* and bestowed upon him royal majesty such as no *king* [including David] in Israel had before him” (1 Chr 29:25, see also 29:23–24), there was no need to strengthen ties inside or outside of the kingdom. Thus, the Chronicler omits the passage regarding Solomon’s marriage with Pharaoh’s daughter at this point, and mentions it only briefly at a later stage in Solomon’s reign (2 Chr 8:11a // 1 Kgs 9:24a).⁶¹

Following his visit to Gibeon, Solomon expresses his will to build the Temple (and only *after* that to build his palace, 2 Chr 1:18 [ET, 2:1]). The project is presented as the fulfillment of Nathan’s prophecy (1 Chr 17:11–12 // 2 Sam 7:12–13) and David’s Testament.⁶² Consequently, the Chronicler omits 1 Kings 6:37–38, which reports that Solomon started to build the Temple only after four years. Solomon did not waste

⁶⁰ Certainly, the Pharaoh under review was from the Twenty-First Dynasty. Yet, it is debated whether he should be identified with Psusennes II or Siamun; see the survey of opinions by Särkiö, *Die Weisheit und Macht Salomos in der israelitischen Historiographie*, pp. 16–17. On the marriage of Solomon with the daughter of Pharaoh, and the relation between Solomon and Egypt, see Malamat, *Israel in Biblical Times*, pp. 182–191.

⁶¹ Although the Chronicler omits the report regarding the house that Solomon built for Pharaoh’s daughter (1 Kgs 7:8b, which appears in 1 Kgs 7:1–12 – a paragraph which he completely omitted), he explains why Solomon built a separate house/palace for Pharaoh’s daughter: “For he said my wife shall not dwell in the house of David, king of Israel, for the places where the ark of the Lord has come are holy” (2 Chr 8:11b). Obviously, this explanation does not favor Pharaoh’s daughter. In fact, the Chronicler minimizes this issue and reduces its importance as much as possible: Of the five times that the daughter of Pharaoh is mentioned in Kings (1 Kgs 3:1; 7:8b; 9:16, 24; 11:1), he refers to her only once (2 Chr 8:11).

⁶² According to 2 Sam 7 David expressed his wish to build a Temple to God, but the task was postponed and left to his descendant. There is no clue in Samuel-Kings that David prepared any material for the building of the Temple or requested Solomon to build it. The Chronicler incorporates 2 Sam 7 in his account (1 Chr 17). However, he also adds elaborate detail regarding these matters (1 Chr 22; 28; 29:20–21).

any time, not even to pronounce judgment between the two harlots (1 Kgs 3:16–28). The Chronicler omits this episode (although it could enhance the reputation of the king as a wise man) as well as Solomon's list of officials and the passage about his wealth (1 Kgs 4:1–5:14). Instead, Chronicles recounts that following the sacrifice in Gibeon, without delay Solomon organized the worker groups in the kingdom (2 Chr 2:1 [ET, 2:2]), and contacted King Hiram of Tyre in order to obtain professional crafts, wood, and other materials from Lebanon to build the Temple (2 Chr 2:2–15 [ET, 2:3–16]). Furthermore, according to the Chronicler Solomon was the one who initiated the contact between the two kingdoms by sending a diplomatic delegation to Hiram (2 Chr 2:3 [ET, 2:4]).⁶³ This is contrary to what was stated in 1 Kings 5:15–28 (ET, 5:1–14), where it is Hiram who contacts Solomon and the latter only reacts to Hiram's delegation to Jerusalem. Nevertheless, the successful diplomatic and trade relationship between Solomon and Hiram resulted in the building of the Temple in Jerusalem (2 Chr 3:1–5:1 // 1 Kgs 6:1–7:51), in fulfillment of Nathan's prophecy and David's Testament.⁶⁴

VII. CONCLUSION

Whereas in 1 Kings 1–2, Solomon's rise to power came about through political intrigues and the calculated assassinations of potential rivals, in Chronicles Solomon's succession to the throne is entirely peaceful. Accordingly, while both 1 Kings and 1 Chronicles use the "Testament" of David to aid their presentation of Solomon's selection as king, they do so in differing ways. Kings seems to acknowledge that this came about through a scheme, requiring decisive judgment upon others to consolidate Solomon's power, and it attempts to exonerate Solomon for these actions as

⁶³ Perhaps the Chronicler attempts to justify the request for help from the foreign king to build a Temple for God by adding (to the text from 1 Kgs 5:19–20 [ET, 5:5–6]) a new paragraph in 2 Chr 2:4–8 (ET, 2:5–9; with an *inclusio*: "And the house which I build is great . . . the house which I build is great," 2:4a and 8b [ET, 2:5a, 9b]). See also the commentary ascribed to Rashi on 2:4; S. Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and its Place in Biblical Thought*, 2nd ed., Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des Antiken Judentums 9 (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1997), pp. 479–480. However, David already spoke about the great size and quality of the planned Temple: "the house to be built for the Lord must be exceedingly magnificent, famous and an object of praise for all the lands" (1 Chr 22:5). So, Solomon only continues to express his father's vision of the Temple.

⁶⁴ On this issue see in detail, [Chapter Thirteen](#).

merely the fulfillment of his father's Testament, so far as possible. It further claims that Solomon's opponents (such as Adonijah and Shimei) brought death upon themselves through their foolish behavior. Only later, the Deuteronomistic historian adds a religious element to David's Testament.

By contrast, Chronicles never acknowledges any rival or opposition to Solomon's succession, omitting all executions and therefore any need to justify them. It portrays the succession as a divinely inspired, peaceful, and largely ceremonial process, without any struggle or conspiracy, and therefore attributes to David's Testament only religious and moral injunctions, such as Temple-building and keeping the divine commandments.

Neither Testament is likely to go back to the historical David – both reflect secondary attempts to justify Solomon's actions – yet in both David solemnly charges Solomon to carry out the tasks that he subsequently accomplishes at the beginning of his reign: In 1 Kings 2, Solomon has Joab and Shimei executed, along with his brother and rival to the throne, Adonijah. He also marries Pharaoh's daughter, which was clearly a politically oriented marriage, in order to strengthen his position from the outside. Only after these actions did Solomon visit the high place at Gibeon to sacrifice and obtain a divine revelation. He started to build the Temple four years after his throne succession (1 Kgs 6:37–38).

In the Chronistic history, however, Solomon is unquestionably the legitimate king from the very beginning, and his first acts are to visit "God's tent of meeting, which Moses the servant of the Lord had made," being held at Gibeon (2 Chr 1:3, an "addition"), and then to begin work on the Temple itself (2 Chr 2:1–5:1 [ET, 2:2–5:1]). Moreover, in Chronicles Solomon's kingship is more than just political: It symbolizes the union of theocracy and monarchy. He is the representative of God on earth, as well as the king of the people and their representative before God. He fulfilled his father's Testament by maintaining the Lord's commandments and by building the Temple as his first priority. While David was stained with blood (regardless of blame or innocence), Solomon was peaceful and pure, without any stain or sin.

CHAPTER 12

“Why Is the City in an Uproar?”

Solomon’s Coronation Story in Its Biblical Context

I. INTRODUCTION

The story of Solomon’s coronation in 1 Kings 1:38–41 packs a great deal of drama into a short space. Here the young prince is hastily anointed king at the Gihon Spring, in order to circumvent his older brother Adonijah’s attempt to claim the throne. One way that the drama is heightened is by the sound of the people’s joy at Solomon’s coronation carrying across the city and being heard by his rivals. This is one of a number of texts in which biblical narrators describe the sounds of loud musical instruments and/or emotional human voices being heard somewhere else, as a literary device to transfer the reader from one place or group of people to another. Yet this device seems to be used as much more than merely a technical literary tool. It has been employed also as a significant motif that recurs at a number of important turning points in Israel’s history, such as at changes in leadership or at the beginning of a new era in the nation’s life. This literary device and motif was not necessarily invented by the author of the Succession Narrative, but is clearly evident also in several other narratives in the Hebrew Bible, particularly in the early and late historiographical writings. That background throws new light on the story of Solomon’s coronation in 1 Kings 1, and extends the contrasts with 1 Chronicles highlighted in earlier chapters of this volume.

II. LOUD NOISES HEARD FAR AWAY AT SOLOMON’S CORONATION AND ELSEWHERE IN SAMUEL-KINGS

1. *Solomon’s Coronation*

In Solomon’s succession narrative in 1 Kings 1, this phenomenon appears in the description of his coronation, where the author recounts (1 Kgs 1:38–41):

וירד צדוק הכהן ונתן הנביא ובניהו בן־יהוידע והכרתי והפלתי וירכבו את־שלמה על־פרדת המלך דוד וילכו
 אתו על־גחון. ויקח צדוק הכהן את־קרן השמן מן־האהל וימשח את־שלמה ויתקעו בשופר ויאמרו כל־העם
 יחי המלך שלמה. ויעלו כל־העם אחריו והעם מחללים בחללים ושמחים שמחה גדולה ותבקע הארץ
 בקולם. וישמע אדניהו וכל־הקראים אשר אתו והם כלו לאכל וישמע יואב את־קול השופר ויאמר מדוע
 קול־הקריה הזמה.

So the priest Zadok, the prophet Nathan, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites and the Pelethites, went down and had Solomon ride on King David's mule, and led him to Gihon. There the priest Zadok took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the shofar [i.e., a ram's horn used as a trumpet], and **all the people shouted**,¹ "Long live King Solomon!" And all the people went up following him, playing on pipes and rejoicing with great joy, so that the earth was split with their sound. And Adonijah and all the guests who were with him heard it as they finished feasting. And when Joab heard the sound of the shofar, he said, "Why is the city in an uproar?"

In this story the narrator indicates that "all the people shouted, 'Long live King Solomon!'" Then they went up following him, "playing on pipes and rejoicing with great joy, so that the earth was split with their sound" (1 Kgs 1:40). The narrator uses these musical sounds and rejoicing human voices to transfer the reader from the party of Solomon to the counter-party of Adonijah: "And Adonijah and all the guests who were with him *heard it*" (1 Kgs 1:41). From this point on, the narrator describes the events that took place in the party of Adonijah. Narratively, therefore, the motif of hearing music and voices from elsewhere serves to mark a geographic transition in the story, elegantly passing from the scene at the Gihon Spring to the dinner hosted by Adonijah, Solomon's rival in his bid for the kingship.

However, the transition is more than just literary, because through this device the narrator also marks a transition from the exaltation of Solomon and his party on the one hand, to the downfall of Adonijah and his party on the other. That is to say, the literary device is used to bridge between contrasting parties, and not just geographically distant ones, and as such it highlights a crucial turning point in Israelite history in general, and in the history of the Davidic dynasty in particular. That this is intentional is suggested by comparison with several other occurrences of this motif in biblical narrative:

¹ Although the Hebrew text is ויאמרו כל־העם, the context implies that the people did not simply "say," but rather "shouted."

2. Joash's Coronation

The most immediate parallel appears in the story of the coronation of King Joash of Judah in 2 Kings 11. Here the narrator recounts that Jehoiada the high priest brought out the king's son, Joash, placed the crown upon him, and furnished him with a testimony (of the covenant). Then the people "clapped their hands, and shouted, 'Long live the King!'" (יוצא את־בן־המלך ויתן עליו את־הגזר ואת־העדות וימלכו אתו וימשחורו ויכ־כף ויאמרו יחי המלך); 2 Kgs 11:12), much as occurs in 1 Kings 1:39. By these loud voices of rejoicing the narrator moves his audience to the counterparty of Queen Athaliah (2 Kgs 11:13–14):

ותשמע עתליה את־קול הרצין העם ותבא אל־העם בית יהוה. ותרא והנה המלך עמד על־העמוד... וכל־עם הארץ שמח ותקע בהצצרות ותקרע עתליה את־בגדיה ותקרא קשר קשר.

And when Athaliah heard the noise of the guard and of the people, she came to the people in the Temple of the Lord. And when she looked, behold, the king stood on a pillar . . . and all the people of the land rejoiced, and blew with trumpets; and Athaliah tore her clothes, and cried, "Treason! Treason!"

At least some elements of Solomon's coronation also appear in this description of the coronation of Joash of Judah (2 Kgs 11:12–14): Jehoiada the high priest, accompanied by the commanders of the army units, anoints him as a king, and the people clap and shout, "Long live the King!" The people play trumpets and rejoice.² Presumably, both coronations followed an established protocol for the coronation of a king in Judah, which differs from those known from Mesopotamia.³ However, it is unlikely that either of these accounts is simply a copy of the other, as there are also differences between the descriptions of the two coronations, due to the unique circumstances of each: Solomon is anointed at the Gihon Spring, whereas Joash is carried into the Temple, most likely in fear of Athaliah. Also, Joash has a crown placed on his head, and is presented with a copy of the covenant that has just been made by

² For more detailed comparison of the stories, see de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, pp. 102–107.

³ For example, the description of the coronation from Erech: "He (the ruler) entered into Eanna [i.e., the temple of Ištar]. He drew near the resplendent throne dais. He placed the bright scepter in his hand. He drew near the throne dais of Nin-men-na ("Lady of the Crown"). He fastened the golden crown upon his head. He drew near to the throne dais of Nin-PA ("Lady of the Scepter"). Nin-PA, fit for heaven and earth . . . After she [i.e., Nin-PA] had discarded his 'name (of) smallness,' she did not call his *bur-gi* name, but called his "name (of) rulership"; see Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, pp. 245–246.

Jehoiada. Neither of the latter is said about Solomon, though it is most likely that Solomon was crowned as well at a different time.

Nevertheless, in this story as well, an important turning point in the histories of the kingdom of Judah and the Davidic dynasty is emphasized. Joash was the last remaining member of the Davidic royal family, having been hidden in the Temple during Athaliah's attempt to wipe out the house of David, so this scene marks the restoration of Davidic rule after Athaliah's disastrous coup. Once again, the motif of hearing from a distance is used not only to mark a geographical change of scene, but to signal a major transition in the history of the Judean monarchy.

3. *The Ark Narrative*

This literary device is also used twice in the Ark Narrative (1 Sam 4–6 + 2 Sam 6), which was interwoven into the complex of the Deuteronomistic history:⁴

A. *Eben-Haezer Battle*

In the description of the battle between the Israelites and Philistines in Eben-Haezer in 1 Samuel 4, the narrator recounts that the Israelites sent people to Shiloh, to bring from there the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of hosts to their camp. Immediately, **“all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth trembled. And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, ‘What is the meaning of the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews?’”** (1 Sam 4:4–6a). From this point on the narrator describes the events in the Philistines' camp (1 Sam 4:6b–9). In full, 1 Samuel 4:4–8a reads:

וישלח העם שלה וישאו משם את ארון ברית־יהוה צבאות ישב הכרבים ושם שני בני־עלי עם־ארון ברית האלהים חפני ופינחס. ויהי כבוא ארון ברית־יהוה אל־המחנה וירעו כלי־ישראל תרועה גדולה ותהם הארץ. וישמעו פלשתים את־קול התרועה ויאמרו מה קול התרועה הגדולה הזאת במחנה העברים וידעו כי ארון יהוה בא אל־המחנה. ויראו הפלשתים כי אמרו בא אלהים אל־המחנה ויאמרו אוי לנו כי לא היתה כזאת אתמול שלשם. אוי לנו מי יצילנו מיד האלהים האדירים האלה. . .

⁴ On the Ark Narrative, see for example, J. Gutman, “The History of the Ark,” ZAW 83 (1971), pp. 22–30; A. F. Campbell, *The Ark Narrative* (1 Sam 4–6; 2 Sam 6): A Form-Critical and Traditio-Historical Study, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 16 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1975); K. Bodner, “Ark-Eology: Shifting Emphases in ‘Ark Narrative’ Scholarship,” CurBR 4 (2006), pp. 169–197.

So the people sent to Shiloh, and brought from there the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim. The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the Ark of the Covenant of God. When the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord came into the camp, **all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth trembled.** *And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, "What is the meaning of the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews?"* When they learned that the Ark of the Lord had come to the camp, the Philistines were afraid; for they said, "Gods have come into the camp." They also said, "Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before. Woe to us! Who can deliver us from the power of these mighty gods?"

In this case, however, although the arrival of the Ark raised confidence in their camp, the Israelites lost both the battle and the Ark, and the two sons of the High Priest Eli were killed (1 Sam 4:10–11). Yet that is not the end of the story.

B. From Shiloh to the House of Eli

In the following passage – 1 Samuel 4:12–18 – the motif and literary device of hearing from a distance is used once again. Here the narrator tells how the report of the defeat of the Israelite forces in Eben-Haezer, the captivity of the Ark of the Covenant, and the deaths of Hophni and Phinehas, reached Eli the high priest. The narrator moves the reader from the people of the city of Shiloh to the house of Eli as follows: **"The entire city cried out. And when Eli heard the noise of the outcry, he said, 'What is the noise of this uproar?'"** (1 Sam 4:13–14a). Next, the narrator recounts what happened in the house of Eli, to the priest himself and to his daughter-in-law (4:14b–22). The key transition occurs at the end of 4:12 and the beginning of 4:13. In full, 1 Samuel 4:12–18 states:

וירץ איש בנימין מהמערכה ויבא שלה ביום ההוא ומדיו קרעים ואדמה על־ראשו.⁵ ויבוא והנה עלי יושב על הכסא יך דרך מצפה כי היה לבו חרד על ארון האלהים והאיש בא להגיד בעיר **ותזעק כל העיר.** וישמע עלי את קול הצעקה ויאמר *מה קול ההמון הזה והאיש מהר ויבא ויגד לעלי.* ועלי בן־תשעים ושמונה שנה ועינו קמה ולא יכול לראות. ויאמר האיש אל עלי אנכי הבא מן המערכה ואני מן־המערכה נסתי היום ויאמר מה־היה הדבר בני. ויען המבשר ויאמר נס ישראל לפני פלשתים וגם מגפה גדולה היתה בעם וגם־שני בניך מתו חפני ופינחס וארון האלהים נלקחה. ויהי כהזכירו את־ארון האלהים ויפל מעל הכסא אחרנית בעד יד השער ותשבר מפרקתו וימת כ־זקן האיש וכבד והוא שפט את־ישראל ארבעים שנה.

And a man of Benjamin ran from the battle line, and came to Shiloh the same day, with his clothes torn and with earth upon his head. When he

⁵ Compare the phrase על־ראשו ואדמה קרעים ומדיו with על ראשו ואדמה קרעים ובגדיו in 2 Sam 1:2.

arrived, Eli was sitting upon his seat by the road watching, for his heart trembled for the Ark of God. And when the man came to the city, and told the news, **the entire city cried out.** *And when Eli heard the noise of the outcry, he said, “What is the noise of this uproar?”* Then the man came quickly and told Eli. Now Eli was ninety-eight years old and his eyes were set, so that he could not see. The man said to Eli, “I have just come from the battle; I fled from the battle today.” He said, “How did it go, my son?” The messenger replied, “Israel has fled before the Philistines, and there has also been a great slaughter among the troops; your two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the Ark of God has been captured.” When he mentioned the Ark of God, Eli fell backward from his seat by the side of the gate; and his neck was broken and he died, for he was an old man and heavy. He had judged Israel forty years.

Though these stories in 1 Samuel 4 do not involve coronation scenes such as those in 1 Kings 1 and 2 Kings 11, here as well the motif of hearing from elsewhere serves as both a geographical and a political transition point: The Israelites not only lose their sovereignty to the Philistines, but also their leadership under Eli and his sons. Particularly the second case is in a manner more comparable to 1 Kings 1:38–41.⁶

One distinctive feature that appears in three of these four cases in Samuel-Kings is that the first response by those in the second party is to ask a question about the meaning of the noise / sound (קול). That is, in 1 Samuel 4:6, “when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said ‘What is the meaning of the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews?’”; in 1 Samuel 4:14, “when Eli heard the noise of the outcry, he said, ‘What is the noise of this uproar?’”; and in 1 Kings 1:41b, “when Joab heard the sound of the shofar, he said, ‘Why is the city in an uproar?’” In the latter two cases, there is an explicit response from a messenger (מבשר; see 1 Sam 4:17; 1 Kgs 1:42–43). In the case of Joash’s coronation, Athaliah does not respond with a question – perhaps by this point the meaning was clear! Instead she “came to the people in the Temple of the Lord . . . and Athaliah tore her clothes and cried, ‘Treason! Treason!’” (2 Kgs 11:13–14).

⁶ Interestingly, the description of the arrival of the Ark to the camp used the words “so that the earth trembled” (ותהם הארץ), much as in 1 Kgs 1:40 “the earth split” (ותבקע הארץ). The verb is different in 1 Kgs 1:40, but the words הוּמָה and תָּהָם also appear in the latter passage, in the words of Joab and Jonathan (1:41, 45).

III. OCCURRENCES OF THE MOTIF ELSEWHERE IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

1. *The Late Biblical Historiography: Chronicles and Ezra*

This literary device also appears twice in the late biblical historiography: once in 2 Chronicles 23:11–13, where the Chronicler copies the text of his *Vorlage* from 2 Kings 11:12–14 regarding the coronation of King Joash. Then once again it appears in the account of erecting the foundation of the Second Temple, as described in Ezra 3:10–4:3, while the key transition point is in 3:13 and 4:1. Ezra 3:10b–13 recounts:

ויעמידו הכהנים מלבשים בחצצרות והלויים בני אסף במצלחים להלל את יהוה . . . ויענו בהלל ובהודות ליהוה כי טוב כי לעולם חסדו על ישראל וכל העם הריעו תרועה גדולה בהלל ליהוה על הוסד בית יהוה ורבים מהכהנים והלויים וראשי האבות הזקנים אשר ראו את הבית הראשון ביסדו זה הבית בעיניהם כמים בקול גדול ורבים בתרועה בשמחה להרים קול. ואין העם מכירים קול תרועת השמחה לקול בכי העם כי העם מריעים תרועה גדולה והקול נשמע עד למרחוק

The priests in their vestments came forward *with trumpets*, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, *with cymbals*, to praise the Lord . . . And they sang responsively in praising and giving thanks to the Lord: For he is good, for his grace endures forever towards Israel. *And all the people shouted with a great shout* when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. But many of the priests and Levites and chiefs of the fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first house, *wept with a loud voice* when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes,⁷ *though many shouted aloud for joy*. And the people could not distinguish *the sound of joyful shouting from the sound of people weeping*,⁸ because *the people shouted loudly, and the sound was heard from far away*.

⁷ See also Hag 2:3–9; and the discussion by I. Kalimi, *Early Jewish Exegesis and Theological Controversy: Studies in Scriptures in the Shadow of Internal and External Controversies*, Jewish and Christian Heritage Series 2 (Assen: Van Gorcum [now under E. J. Brill, Leiden], 2002), pp. 25–31.

⁸ Note the chiasmic structure that the author creates between the verses:

- (a) “*wept with a loud voice* when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes,
- (b) *though many shouted aloud for joy*.
- (c) And the people could not distinguish
- (b') the sound of joyful shouting from
- (a') the sound of people weeping.”

Here the author continues to describe what impact the founding of the Temple and the celebration in Judah had on their opponents, by saying (Ezra 4:1–3):

וישמעו צרי יהודה ובנימין כי בני הגולה בונים היכל ליהוה אלהי ישראל ויגשו אל זרובבל ואל ראשי האבות ויאמרו להם נבנה עמכם . . . ויאמר להם זרובבל וישוע ושאר ראשי האבות לישראל לא לכם ולנו לבנות בית לאלהינו כי אנחנו יחד נבנה ליהוה אלהי ישראל כאשר צונו המלך כורש מלך פרס.

And when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the sons of the exiles were building the Temple. They came to Zerubbabel, and to the chiefs of the fathers' houses and said to them, 'Let us build with you.' . . . And Zerubbabel and Joshua, and the rest of the chiefs of the fathers' houses of Israel, said to them, 'You have nothing to do with us in building a house to our God; but we ourselves alone will build to the Lord God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us.

Indeed, the verb וישמעו in Ezra 4:1, “And *when the adversaries* of Judah and Benjamin *heard* that the sons of the exiles were building the Temple,” does not necessarily mean that they heard the real sounds of the musical instruments and rejoicing and weeping of the people. However, by literary proximity the author gives the impression that this was, in fact, the case.

2. *Reflection of the Motif in the Joseph Story*

A comparable literary phenomenon appears also in the Joseph story (Gen 37–50),⁹ where the biblical narrator transfers the reader from the house of Joseph, where the scene of the meeting between Joseph and his brothers took place, to the house of Pharaoh, as follows: “Then Joseph could not restrain himself before all those who stood by him; and he cried: ‘Cause every man to go out from me.’ . . . And he raised his voice aloud with weeping;¹⁰ and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard” (ולא־יכל יוסף להתאפק לכל הנצבים עליו ויקרא הוציאו כל־איש מעלי. . .)¹¹ ויתן את־קלו בבכי וישמעו מצרים וישמע בית פרעה (Gen 45:1–2).¹¹

⁹ On Joseph's Story, see C. Westermann, *Die Joseph-Erzählung*, Calwer Taschenbibliothek 1 (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1990); Kalimi, *Early Jewish Exegesis and Theological Controversy*, pp. 61–103; F. W. Golka, “Genesis 37–50: Joseph Story or Israel-Joseph Story?” *CurBR* 2 (2004), pp. 153–177, and there are more references to the earlier secondary literature.

¹⁰ The phrase נתן את קלו can mean “lifted his voice [aloud],” compare, for example, Jer 22:20; 48:34.

¹¹ This is the third and the most climactic of Joseph's cries mentioned in the story. The first two cries that are mentioned in Gen 42:24 and 43:30–31 happened privately, rather than aloud and in front of his brothers or any other people.

The use of the literary device becomes more obvious in 45:14–20: “**And he** fell upon his brother Benjamin’s neck and **wept**; and **Benjamin wept** upon his neck. And he kissed all his brothers, and **wept on them**; and after that his brothers **talked with him**. And *the voice was heard in Pharaoh’s house*, saying, Joseph’s brothers have come; and it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants” (45:14–16). Then the narrator continues to recount the happenings at Pharaoh’s house: “And Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Say to your brothers, Do this; load your beasts, and go to the land of Canaan’” (45:17–20).

Except for 1 Samuel 4:13–14, this use of the motif in Joseph story differs from the others, in that it transfers the audience between two parties – the Hebrews and the Egyptians – but not between two *competing* parties. However, like the others it also serves more than simply to change the scene. Here Joseph revealing himself to his brothers – and its being overheard by the Pharaoh’s house – is another important turning point in the life of the people of Israel: This marks the fulfillment of Joseph’s dream that he would have authority over his brothers (Gen 37:5–12), and further signals the starting point of moving Jacob’s entire family to Egypt, where they would remain until the events of the Exodus (Exod 1–15), that is, in fulfillment of the promises to Abraham as recounted in Genesis 15:7–21.

3. Counterexample: *The Book of Esther*

Finally, it is noteworthy that in at least one episode in the biblical literature, the narrator does not use this literary device where he could have: In the book of Esther, the narrator had a good opportunity to transfer his readers from Mordechai in the street, to the palace where Esther stayed, by hearing his loud cries, as expressed in 4:1: “When Mordechai learned all that had been done, Mordechai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went through the city, *wailing with a loud and bitter cry*.” However, the narrator either was unaware of this literary device or knew it but preferred – for whatever reason – to relate the story in a simple way by saying: “When *Esther’s maids and her eunuchs came and told her*, she was deeply distressed” (4:4). The narrator could have written something similar to: “Mordechai was *wailing with a loud and bitter cry* . . . and Esther heard *the noise of the bitter cry* and,” but he did not do so. It is not necessarily the case that the author of Esther deliberately refrained from using this literary device. However, the fact that the author did not transfer the audience to the other location using this literary motif, demonstrates that it was not required to do so.

IV. BETWEEN LITERARY TRANSITION AND TYPE-SCENE

The examples from various biblical narratives investigated in this chapter demonstrate that there are certain situations in which a biblical narrator uses sounds of musical instruments and voices in order to shift the attention of his audience from one place or group to its counterpart. The pattern in all cases involves the following elements, although there are minor nuances between them:

1. A loud noise is made in one location, by one party;
2. The noise is heard by another party in a different location;
3. The second party responds to the noise;
4. The scene continues in the latter location.¹²

One of the most visible nuances is that in three cases – all in Samuel-Kings – the first response by the hearer(s) is to ask about the significance of the noise (1 Sam 4:6; 4:14; 1 Kgs 1:41b). In other cases, there are different types of response: “And it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants” (Gen 45:16); whereas Athaliah cried: “Treason! Treason!” (2 Kgs 11:13–14 // 2 Chr 23:12–13).

This literary device should be distinguished from the “type-scenes” common in the Homeric literature,¹³ and also from those in the Hebrew Bible that were pointed out by Robert Alter and others.¹⁴ For instance, Matthew Clark notes that in four different scenes in the *Iliad* we find a description of a warrior arming himself for battle, and while details differ, in each case the order is the same: He puts on greaves, breastplate, sword, shield, helmet, and spear, always in that order.¹⁵ Similarly, the best-known biblical type-scene “includes a man traveling to a foreign land who meets a young woman at a well. Water is drawn from the well, either by the man or the woman. The young woman then rushes home to tell her

¹² Though in the case of Athaliah in 2 Kgs 11:13–14 // 2 Chr 23:12–13 and “the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin” in Ezra 4:1–3 the party that hears does not remain in the distant location, but immediately comes to where the noise originated.

¹³ See W. Arend, *Die typischen Szenen bei Homer* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1933); B. Fenik, *Typical Battle Scenes in the Iliad: Studies in the Narrative Technique of Homeric Battle Descriptions*, Hermes Einzelschriften 21 (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1968); C. Niens, *Struktur und Dynamik in den Kampfszenen der Ilias* (Heidelberg: Groos, 1987); M. Clark, “Formulas, Metre and Type-Scenes,” in R. Fowler (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Homer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 117–138, with examples and bibliography.

¹⁴ See Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, pp. 47–62 (“Biblical Type-Scenes and the Uses of Convention”).

¹⁵ See Clark, “Formulas, Metre and Type-Scenes,” pp. 134–135.

family of the man's arrival. The man is invited to her home for a meal and lodging, a betrothal is arranged, and a wedding ensues."¹⁶ Such stories are told about Jacob and Rachel in Genesis 29:1–13, and Moses and Zipporah in Exodus 2:15–22, and when Abraham's servant finds a bride for Isaac in Genesis 24:11–65. Alter suggests that when "a biblical narrator – and he might have originally been an oral storyteller, though that remains a matter of conjecture – came to the moment of his hero's betrothal, both he and his audience were aware that the scene had to unfold in particular circumstances, according to a fixed order."¹⁷ Thus, the type-scenes in the Homeric literature as well as those in the biblical literature are built from *a series of actions* in a fixed sequence. In fact, in these scenes the reader knew exactly what would happen next and anticipated hearing the next act according to the frozen framework of the scene (although the details of each scene change).

By contrast, the literary feature we are considering is neither as detailed as those type-scenes, nor tied to a fixed set of actions. Though in the cases of the coronations of Solomon and Joash there are some repeating elements, these could reflect a coronation protocol rather than a literary motif. In all the cases of hearing sounds from a distance, however, the motif seems to be a more technical means by which the narrator transfers his reader from one party to another or from one place to another. By using musical sounds and/or human voices being raised dramatically and their being heard by someone somewhere else, a literary transition is achieved.

That is to say, the literary device is not a fixed sequence of events so much as a fixed means of indicating a transition from one geographic place to another, and from one group of people to another. As such, it allowed the author/editor to weave together various narrative strands in a sophisticated way that enhanced their literary quality, without falsifying the information. Moreover, as a turning point, this motif (or device) is usually much shorter than a type-scene, which is often a framework for a full, self-standing story. Instead of saying something explicit, such as: "now let us see what happened at the other place (or in the other party)," the narrator uses the various sounds and voices as a literary instrument to move his reader to another party or place. This also allows the author to highlight the transition, which in most cases marks more than just a

¹⁶ D. N. Fewell and G. A. Phillips, "Drawn to Excess, or Reading beyond Betrothal," *Semeia* 77 (1997), pp. 23–58, esp. p. 27.

¹⁷ Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, pp. 51–52.

change of geographic location, but a change in political situation, or even a turning point in Israelite history.¹⁸

V. CONCLUSION

A number of general conclusions might be deduced from the aforementioned narratives that use this literary device and motif: Four of the seven narratives appear in royal contexts (Solomon and Adonijah in 1 Kings, Joash and Athaliah in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles, and Joseph and his brothers and house of Pharaoh in Genesis). The other three are related to conflicts with Israel's surrounding neighbors: the battle at Eben-Haezer and its horrible results (Israelites and Philistines, the people of Shiloh and house of Eli), and the returned exiles in Judah and the neighboring peoples.

All of these narratives also relate to shifts in the leadership and/or political situation of Israel or Judah: Joseph's acknowledgment by his brothers and the move to Egypt in Genesis, Israel's subordination to the Philistines and the death of the high priestly family in Samuel, and two major transitions in the Davidic dynasty in Kings (the second of which is repeated in Chronicles). And while there is no change in leadership connected to the case in Ezra, it also marks a major transition in Israel's life: It highlights the reestablishment of the Temple after the exile, as well as the beginning of the conflict that this sparked between the Judeans and their surrounding neighbors.

It is therefore probable that this literary device and motif was known among the ancient Israelite authors (/ editors) of these texts, and that they deliberately employed it to emphasize these various shifts in the nation's history. This is especially the case in Samuel-Kings, which tie together four major transitions in Israelite history. The cases in Ezra and Genesis are a bit different, but they come from different periods and authors, so they need not carry precisely the same nuances. Nevertheless, even they

¹⁸ Nonetheless, that does not mean that whenever the biblical narrator uses this literary device its content is automatically fictional, unreliable information; that is, there were no musical sounds and/or human voices in reality, or the major transitions marked in this way did not occur. After all, sophisticated storytelling is not incompatible with accurate reporting of history. Indeed, it is true also for type-scenes that they have more to do with *how a story is told* than with whether it actually happened. A type-scene, just like any other literary motif, can be used in fiction and nonfiction, so far as those categories are even valid regarding ancient literature.

mark major transitions in Israelite history, that is, the move to Egypt, and the restoration of the Temple and the relations with the neighbors.

In this light, it is notable that while the Chronicler preserves the instance of this motif in 2 Kings 11, he omits the story of the coronation as described in 1 Kings 1:38–41 from his version of Solomon's rise. Given the strong association between this motif and major turning points in Israel's life, this omission can also be seen as part and parcel of the Chronicler's larger smoothing of the transition from David to Solomon. For the author(s) or editor(s) of the texts in Kings, Solomon's coronation is a major transition comparable to the end of Eli's high priesthood (which paved the way to Samuel, and later for the monarchy), and to the restoration of Davidic rule after the royal house was nearly destroyed by Athaliah. For the Chronicler, however, Solomon's coronation was hardly a transition at all: There was no counterparty, for all David's sons (including Adonijah) and officials (including Joab) willingly supported Solomon (1 Chr 29:24). His ascension to the throne was entirely in continuity with what preceded it, fully planned and prepared for by both God and David.

CHAPTER 13

Solomon's Temple Building and Its Divine Approval in Biblical Historiographies

I. INTRODUCTION: A LITERARY EXAMINATION

In terms of its literary and cultural legacy, the Temple built by King Solomon in Jerusalem is certainly the most famous in ancient Israel, and one of the most important buildings in the ancient Near East more broadly. It is described most fully in the early and late biblical historical writings – that is, the books of Kings and Chronicles. Most likely, this Temple was used as a model for the description of the wealth of the Wilderness Tabernacle of Moses found in Exodus 25–31 and 35–40 (Priestly), as well as for the visionary future Temple described in Ezekiel 40–48. Yet the descriptions of the Tabernacle themselves came to influence how the Temple was described in the book of Chronicles. The use of Solomon's Temple as a paradigm in the books of Exodus and Ezekiel, its historicity, and its similarity to the various temples in the ancient Near East unearthed by archaeologists, have been well researched in modern scholarship by generations of biblicists, historians, and archaeologists, and at the moment very little innovative information could be added – if any.¹

¹ See, for example, the classic monograph by Wellhausen, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*, pp. 37; English translation: idem, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, p. 37; and the recent works by V. A. Hurowitz, “Yhwh's Exalted House Revisited: New Comparative Light on the Biblical Image of Solomon's Temple,” in G. Galil et al. (eds.), *The Ancient Near East in the 12th–10th Centuries BCE: Culture and History, Proceedings of the International Conference held at the University of Haifa, 2–5 May, 2010*, Alter Orient und Altes Testament 392 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2012), pp. 229–239; W. Zwickel, *Der Tempelkult in Kanaan und Israel: Studien zur Kultgeschichte Palästinas von der Mittelbronzezeit bis zum Untergang*, Forschungen zum Alten

Since the Temple is considered in the Hebrew Bible itself and in all following traditions to be King Solomon's most important achievement, it is almost unavoidable to discuss this issue in a volume dedicated to him. This chapter will not attempt to evaluate the historicity of the details of the biblical accounts, but instead focuses particularly on a comparison of how and why Kings and Chronicles each describe Solomon's construction of the Temple in the ways that they do. It suggests a fresh explanation for God's disqualification of David from erecting the Temple, and presents a rationale for the place of Solomon's Temple building and its divine approval in the book of Kings and its rewritten parallels in the book of Chronicles. It also shows that the modified account of Solomon's Temple described in Chronicles is according to the priestly Tabernacle of Moses and the rebuilt Second Temple of Zerubbabel, that is, the Temple of the Chronicler's time.² By doing so, the chapter offers additional illustrations of the literary and historiographical methods of the Chronicler.

Building on and extending my previous research on the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles (where one can find more detailed arguments and references), these themes are considered from comparative and historiographical viewpoints, while giving attention to their related key theological frameworks.

II. DAVID, SOLOMON, AND THE PERMISSION TO BUILD THE TEMPLE

According to Nathan's prophecy in 2 Samuel 7, David had expressed his desire to build an enduring Temple for the Lord, but the latter rejected his proposal without explicit justification. He postponed the task to David's successor, saying: "And when your days are fulfilled, and you sleep with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who shall issue from your

Testament 10 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994); idem, *Der salomonische Tempel*, Kulturgeschichte der antiken Welt 83 (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1999); idem, "Der Tempel Salomos im Kontext der Ikonographie und der archäologischen Funde," in Verheyden, *The Figure of Solomon in Jewish, Christian and Islamic Tradition*, pp. 57–84, and the many references to earlier scholarship listed there. Regarding the question of the historicity of Solomon's Temple, see also [Chapter Four](#), §II, 1.

² Recently, Matthew Lynch has discussed "The Temple and Divine Supremacy" in Chronicles (Lynch, *Monotheism and Institutions in the Book of Chronicles*, pp. 72–136, esp. pp. 81–86, 105–130). However, his focus is on how the Temple in Chronicles "participates" in the uniqueness and supremacy of the Lord, rather than focusing on how the Chronicler reshapes the portrayal of Solomon's building of the Temple, as here.

body [literally, bowels] ... he shall build a house for my name" (2 Sam 7:1–17, esp. verses 12–13).

The origin(s) and dating of Nathan's prophecy are widely disputed.³ Such debates lie beyond the scope of this book. However, Moshe Weinfeld correctly notes that the only demonstrably Deuteronomistic element in Nathan's oracle is the reference to God's "name" in association with the Temple (2 Sam 7:13).⁴ The most probable *terminus post quem* of the oracle's base text is the period of Solomon, who is not named, but is clearly alluded to in 2 Samuel 7:12–15, and about whom the prophecy is interpreted in 1 Kings 5:19 (ET, 5:5). From a historiographical viewpoint, the necessity of requesting divine permission to build a temple in 2 Samuel 7 is widely paralleled in the ancient Near Eastern sources, particularly Mesopotamian, while divine refusal also has precedents from at least as early as "the Dynasties of Akkade and Ur III until the Neo-Babylonian period."⁵

Nonetheless, after 2 Samuel 7 no more discussion or even hint of the Temple appears in the book of Samuel, except for the *hieros logos* (ἱερός λόγος, "sacred tale [or word]") regarding the altar that David built at the threshing floor of Araunah / Ornan the Jebusite, which ended a plague in Israel (2 Sam 24:18–25). Furthermore, in what is called "David's

³ For bibliography see, for example, the list of several scholars in Veijola, *Die ewige Dynastie*, p. 68, note 135, and the survey by Oswald, *Nathan der Prophet*, pp. 17–31. For instance, Jörg Jeremias recently concluded that Nathan's prophecy is probably built on an old traditional core, but that its literary base text is from the late monarchic period; see J. Jeremias, *Theologie des Alten Testament*, Grundrisse zum Alten Testament 6 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), pp. 120–122, following Pietsch, "Dieser ist der Sproß Davids...", pp. 15–53.

⁴ Compare, for example, Deut 12:5, 11, 21; 14:23, 24; 16:2, 6, 11; 26:2; 1 Kgs 5:17, 19 [ET, 5:3, 5]; 8:16–20, 29, 44, 49; Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, p. 15 note 5, cf. also 23, 194 note 1, 325; following D. J. McCarthy, "II Samuel 7 and the Structure of the Deuteronomistic History," *JBL* 84 (1965), pp. 131–138, esp. pp. 132, 135–136. The only other certain additions to the chapter (but not the prophecy) appear in 2 Sam 7:22b–24, part of David's prayer, which includes the Deuteronomistic expressions וּלְהַתֵּן (7:22), אֵין כְּמוֹךָ וְאֵין אֱלֹהִים וּלְהַתֵּן (7:22), אֵין כְּמוֹךָ וְאֵין אֱלֹהִים (7:23), and אֵין כְּמוֹךָ וְאֵין אֱלֹהִים (7:23), and אֵין כְּמוֹךָ וְאֵין אֱלֹהִים (7:24); cf. Weinfeld, *ibid.*, pp. 37–38 note 4, 326–329, 331, 350). Less conclusively Deuteronomistic are the reference to "my servant David" (2 Sam 7:5; cf. Josh 1:2, 7; McCarthy, "II Samuel 7," p. 132; Weinfeld, *ibid.*, p. 194), the Hiphil of נָחַ (2 Sam 7:1, 11; cf. e.g., Deut 3:20; 12:10; 25:19; Josh 1:13, 15; 21:44; 22:4; 23:1; 1 Kgs 5:18 [ET, 5:4]; Weinfeld, *ibid.*, p. 343), and לְהִיטֵן (2 Sam 7:8; cf. 2 Sam 5:2; 1 Kgs 1:35; Weinfeld, *ibid.*, p. 355, who notes that the expected Deuteronomistic phrase would be אֵין כְּמוֹךָ וְאֵין אֱלֹהִים, but these are *not* certain, and even if they were, they could by no means prove the entire prophecy late. Aside from 2 Sam 7:13, 22b–24, therefore, Weinfeld is most likely correct that this is "an ancient prophetic vision" (*ibid.*, p. 23).

⁵ See Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in Light of Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic Writings*, pp. 163–167, esp. p. 164.

Testament" (1 Kgs 2:1–9), David instructs Solomon regarding several matters, but not about the Temple building. This is especially surprising in the Deuteronomistic part of the Testament (1 Kgs 2:2–4), where one might well expect a charge to build the Temple. In both cases, the Deuteronomist had a chance to add references to the Temple, but chose not to. This is further highlighted by comparison with the approach taken later on by the Chronicler, who adds an explicit reference to the census story, saying: "This is the house of the Lord God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel" (1 Chr 22:1, an "addition" to 2 Sam 24:25), and also adds a detailed charge to Solomon to build the Temple, in his version of David's Testament (especially 1 Chr 22:11; 28:10–19).⁶

By contrast, in Samuel-Kings Nathan's prophecy is first explicitly applied to Solomon only later, in 1 Kings 5:17–19 (ET, 5:3–5), "And, behold, I intend to build a house to the name of the Lord my God, as the Lord spoke to David my father, saying, Your son, whom I will set upon your throne in your place, he shall build a house to my name."⁷ Here the writer explains that David could not build the Temple simply because of "the wars which were around him on every side" (1 Kgs 5:17 [ET, 5:3]), which left no appropriate time, energy, or resources to undertake such a major building project. Obviously, this statement stands in contrast to 2 Samuel 7:1–2, which clearly states: "And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and *the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies*, the king said to Nathan the prophet, See now, I live in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within curtains." However, it is in line with 2 Samuel 7:11, which affirms that "I *will* give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the Lord declares to you that he Lord will make you a house," as well as 2 Samuel 8:1–15; 10:1–11:1; 12:26–31.⁸

In the Persian period, when the Chronicler retells Nathan's prophecy (1 Chr 17:1–15), he follows the main content of his *Vorlage* in principal, but with some significant emendations, including the omission of the introductory claim that "the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies."⁹ Only later, the Chronicler twice provides an explanation for why David was not allowed to build the desired Temple:

⁶ See the detailed discussions in Chapter Eleven, §§V, 2, and VI.

⁷ Cf. 2 Sam 7:12–13, "And when your days are fulfilled, and you sleep with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who shall issue from your bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name."

⁸ On the contradiction between 2 Sam 7:1 and those other texts, see Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 38–39.

⁹ On the Chronicler's emendations to Nathan's prophecy, see Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 38–39, 94, 136–137, 180–182, 246, 248, 257, 264–265.

And the word of the Lord came to me [i.e., David], saying, “You have shed abundant blood, and have made great wars; you shall not build a house to my name, *because you have shed much blood upon the earth* in my sight.” (1 Chr 22:8; see also 28:3, both “additions”)

According to the Chronicler, therefore, it was not simply that it was an inappropriate time to build the Temple (1 Chr 22:9a), but rather that the very evidence of David’s bloodshed – with or without justification – disqualified him from building the Temple. In the sight of the Chronicler, bloodshed in any case – even in time of war – stains the person who caused it. Thus, David, who caused bloodshed, cannot be the Temple builder.

Furthermore, in the time of the Chronicler, the Jewish community of *Yehud Medinta* (the Province of Judah) had neither a monarchic government nor a substantial military force. In those remote days of the Persian period, one was supposed to trust God, rather than the flesh and blood of military power. Since there was no longer an option of waging a war, one could subject oneself to God only, who was already portrayed as a warrior (יהוה איש מלחמה; Exod 15:3; cf. Isa 42:13), who fights for Israel,¹⁰ “for the war is the Lord’s” (כי ליהוה המלחמה) (1 Sam 17:47),¹¹ or to cite the Chronicler himself: “the war is not yours, but God’s” (לא לכם המלחמה כי לאלהים) (2 Chr 20:15, an “addition”). In light of such a Chronicist perspective it is no wonder that the man of war, David, was disqualified from building the Temple because of his wars, while the “*man of rest/peace*” (איש מנוחה) (1 Chr 22:9a), Solomon, was permitted to build a “*resting-place* (בית מנוחה) for the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord” (1 Chr 28:2).¹² In fact, the Chronicler derives the name שלמה also from שלום (1 Chr 22:9b): “for his name shall be Solomon [*Shlomoh*], and I will give peace [*shalom*] and quiet to Israel in his days”).¹³ War is not desirable, and should be left for God to handle.¹⁴

¹⁰ See, for example, Exod 14:14, יהוה ילחם לכם, “the Lord will fight for you” (cf. Deut 3:22); Josh 10:14, יהוה נלחם לישראל, “the Lord fought for Israel”; Josh 23:10; Zech 14:3, ויצא יהוה ונלחם בגוים ההם כיום ההלחמה ביום קרב, “Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.”

¹¹ See also, Isa 42:13 and Ps 24:8. For the possibility of dating of 1 Sam 17 in the Second Temple period, see A. Rofé, “The Battle of David and Goliath: Folklore, Theology, Eschatology,” in J. Neusner, B. A. Levine, and E. S. Frerichs (eds.), *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), pp. 117–151.

¹² See also 2 Chr 6:41 (קומה יהוה אלהים לעזק) // Ps 132:8 (קומה יהוה לעזקתך); Isa 66:1 (איזה בית אשר תבנלי ואיזה מקום מנוחה).

¹³ Cf. *Ben Sira* 47:13, which links the name שלמה to the noun שלוה (“peace,” “serenity,” “quietude”); see [Chapter Seven, §IV, 3](#).

¹⁴ For a detailed discussion of this issue, see I. Kalimi, “Chronicles,” in R. L. Brawley et al. (eds.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), vol. 1, pp. 86–94, esp. p. 92.

Yet, obviously there is tension between this theology of the Chronicler and his detailed descriptions of David's military victories over Israel's surrounding hostile neighbors (1 Chr 11:4–7, 11–25 // 2 Sam 5:6–9; 23:8–23; 1 Chr 18:1–14 // 2 Sam 8:1–15), and his praise of those victories is reflected in such statements as: וילך דויד הלוך וגדול ויהוה צבאות עמו (“David was continually becoming greater, for the Lord of Hosts was with him,” 1 Chr 11:9 // 2 Sam 5:10); and יצא שם־דויד בכל־הארצות ויהוה נתן את־פחדו על־כל־הגוים (“David's fame spread through all the lands, and the Lord put the fear of him upon all the peoples” (1 Chr 14:17, an “addition” to 2 Sam 5:25).¹⁵ It seems that the Chronicler maintained an admiration for the glorious Davidic victories over the enemies of Israel in the early monarchic era. However, in the same breath, he also developed his pragmatic anti-war theology on the background of the political reality of his own era – the Persian period.

III. THE HEAVENLY–EARTHLY AND FATHER–SON COLLABORATIONS

Although according to 2 Samuel 8:10c–12 David dedicated a tremendous amount of booty “to the Lord,” and in 2 Samuel 24:25 he built an altar on the future site of the Temple, nothing further is said concerning his preparations to build the Temple. By contrast, the Chronicler devotes the better part of several chapters to this matter. This creates a balance between the acts of David, the father, and those of Solomon, his son. The Chronicler also balances heavenly and earthly cooperation to build the Temple. According to the Chronicler, a detailed plan of the Temple and its vessels was provided to David, written by the Lord himself (1 Chr 28:11–19, an “addition”). However, the earthly performance of the building-project remained the task of man – David's successor. Though David was prevented from erecting the actual Temple himself, he did whatever he could to take part in the mission. Thus, not only did he contribute a tremendous amount of booty (1 Chr 18:8b, an “addition” to 2 Sam 8:8; 1 Chr 18:10–11 // 2 Sam 8:10–12), but he also made extensive and essential preparations for the building. David gathered the necessary building materials (stone, wood, gold, silver, copper, iron, and so on), and organized the Temple personnel (priests, Levites, singers, and gatekeepers), which was crucial for the everyday functioning of the Temple (1 Chr 22–29). He also explicitly assigned his successor, Solomon, to build the Temple, and asked his officials and all Israel to support his young son in

¹⁵ See also 1 Chr 18:14 // 2 Sam 8:15.

fulfilling this national task (1 Chr 22:16b–19; 28:21). In addition, the Chronicler stresses several times that Solomon was chosen by his father, as well as by the Lord himself, to undertake this mission.

In Chronicles, Solomon started to perform the actual erecting of the Temple immediately after the death of his father and his return from Gibeon (2 Chr 1:18–5:1 [ET, 2:1–5:1]), while in Kings a few issues are recounted in between the two events (1 Kgs 3:16–5:15).¹⁶ Thus, the Chronicler clarifies that without the actions of both – David and Solomon – the mission of the Temple building could not be implemented rapidly and successfully soon after David's death. In fact, the acts of the father and the son complemented one another.¹⁷

IV. THE PLACE OF THE TEMPLE BUILDING IN SOLOMON'S STORY

The Temple building stands at the heart of the account of Solomon's reign in both the Deuteronomistic and Chronistic histories. Both consider the building of the Temple to be Solomon's most significant achievement. Both give it a central place in their narratives and describe it in detail. The Temple takes the vast majority of the space in the text dedicated to the forty years of Solomon's reign (1 Kgs 5:16–9:9 [ET, 5:2–9:9] // 2 Chr 1:18–7:22 [ET, 2:1–7:22]). These historians gave relatively less space to Solomon's other important activities, such as his international trade and diplomatic relationships, or his economic and political accomplishments, than they give to his preparations, construction, and ceremonial inauguration of the Temple.

This is especially the case in Chronicles, where the Temple project takes on an even more important position than in Kings. The latter devotes less than half the length of its account of Solomon to the Temple, while Chronicles dedicates fully two-thirds of its space to this issue.¹⁸ Since the Temple building took seven years (1 Kgs 6:37–38), the Chronicler covers the remaining thirty-three years of Solomon's reign in only

¹⁶ See Chapter Eleven, §VI.

¹⁷ On this issue see H. G. M. Williamson, "The Accession of Solomon in the Books of Chronicles," *Studies in Persian Period History and Historiography*, Forschungen zum Alten Testament 38 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), pp. 141–149; Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 13–16.

¹⁸ In 1 Kings, circa five chapters (180 verses; 1 Kgs 5:16–9:9 [ET, 5:2–9:9]) of the eleven (428 verses; 1 Kgs 1:1–5:15 [ET, 1:1–5:1]; 9:10–11:43), that is about 42% of the entire space about Solomon, is dedicated to the Temple. The Chronicler, however, devotes six of his nine chapters concerning Solomon's reign to this issue (2 Chr 1:18–7:22 [ET, 2:1–7:22]), that is, 135 verses of the 201 total – about 67%.

three chapters (altogether sixty-six verses), which report almost nothing about his personal characteristics, and offer no example of his extraordinary wisdom (e.g., the story of the two harlots).¹⁹ The Deuteronomistic historian, however, expends six chapters (altogether 248 verses) on Solomon's remaining thirty-three years of reign, that is, almost four times more verses than does the Chronicler.²⁰ Additionally, the Chronicler describes the preparations for the Temple building within the framework of David's story, which stretches over seven chapters (1 Chr 21:24–30; 22:1–26:32; 28:1–29:25). As noted previously, those preparations were not limited to the collection of building materials and the arrangement of the future Temple staff, but also to the royal appointment and public announcement of the future Temple builder, Solomon.

All in all, the Chronicler dedicates about thirteen chapters to the Temple (altogether 332 verses), which is not quite as much space as was given to the Tabernacle in the Torah (also thirteen chapters, but 447 verses), but much more than was devoted to the Temple in Kings (about five chapters, or 180 verses) and to Ezekiel's visionary Temple (about nine chapters, or 212 verses). In other words, the Chronicler devotes 75 percent as much space to the Temple as the Torah does to the Tabernacle, almost twice as much as the book of Kings, and 50 percent more than Ezekiel.

V. MODIFICATION OF SOLOMON'S TEMPLE DESCRIPTION ACCORDING TO MOSES' TABERNACLE AND ZERUBBABEL'S TEMPLE

In light of the Chronicler's very strong interest in the sanctuary, it is surprising that the description of the Temple's actual construction in 2 Chronicles is nearly two-thirds *shorter* than the earlier text in 1 Kings. Chronicles describes this in just fourteen verses (2 Chr 3:1–14), while the same theme in Kings was described in thirty-eight verses (1 Kgs 6:1–38). How one can explain this? Some scholars have taken this as evidence that the Chronicler's *Vorlage* was shorter than the present form of the book of

¹⁹ The Chronicler omits the story in 1 Kgs 3:16–28, and the report about Solomon's wisdom and intellectual creativity in 1 Kgs 5:9–14 (ET 4:29–34). In this regard he cites only the story of the Queen of Sheba (2 Chr 9:1–12 // 1 Kgs 10:1–13).

²⁰ It is worth noting that the first two chapters of the six, namely 1 Kgs 1:1–2:46, describe Solomon's succession to the throne and his establishment, which took only a few years.

Kings.²¹ However, this ignores not only the general tendencies of Chronicles' use of Samuel-Kings that I have emphasized elsewhere, but also overlooks the manner in which the omissions, additions, and emendations to the Chroniclers' account of Solomon's Temple all reflect a consistent approach: Alongside the three longer texts in 1 Kings 6:4–18, 25–27a, 28–38, which the Chronicler does not bring into his book ("omissions"), he also inserts several short but important additions to his *Vorlage*, namely 2 Chronicles 2:3–8, 12–13 [ET, 2:4–9, 13–14]; 3:1, 5–7, 14 ("additions"), and he emends several other significant details of his *Vorlage*. Most of these omissions, additions, and emendations can be seen to reflect the efforts of the Chronicler to modify the description of Solomon's Temple in line with that of the contemporary Temple of Zerubbabel, on the one hand, and the Tabernacle of Moses on the other. Let us turn our attention to consider these differences in detail:

- (1) The author/editor of Kings describes the circumstances that brought Solomon – and not his father David – to build the Temple. In his message to Hiram, king of Tyre, Solomon explains that David was unable to build the desired Temple because of the wars he waged around him. But now, says Solomon, "the Lord my God has given me rest on every side, so that there is neither adversary nor evil hindrance. And, behold, I intend to build a house to the name of the Lord my God" (1 Kgs 5:16–19 [ET, 5:2–5]). Because the Chronicler has already discussed this issue in detail from different viewpoints (1 Chr 17:4–6; 22:7–10; 28:3, "additions"),²² he does not bring this text from Kings into the parallel place in his writing. Instead, Solomon expresses the purpose of the Temple building and expounds his theological concepts regarding God, Temple, and cultic worship, via the message to the pagan king, Hiram (in Chronicles: Hiram; 2 Chr 2:2–9 [ET, 2:3–10]). He states that the house is not for God's dwelling, but rather a place

²¹ See, for example, Auld, *Kings without Privilege*, pp. 22–29, esp. pp. 22–24; this was also recently followed, with some cautions, by D. M. Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 76–78, although Carr here ignores fundamental research on the compositional techniques of Chronicles, such as Kalimi, *Zur Geschichtsschreibung des Chronisten*; idem, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*; see also idem, "Kings with Privilege," pp. 498–517.

²² On this issue see the discussion at §II.

for his *name*.²³ The purpose of the Temple is: “to burn before him sweet incense, and for the offering of the continual bread, and for *the burnt offerings every morning and evening*, on the Sabbaths, and on the New Moons, and on the appointed feasts of the Lord our God” (2 Chr 2:3 [ET, 2:4], an “addition” to 1 Kgs 5:19). However, the cultic custom of a twice-daily *tāmīd* (burnt offering) is described in the Priestly Code (P; Exod 29:38–42; Lev 6:12–16; Num 28:3–8), which is usually considered by scholars to be post-exilic. In the Monarchic period, the Israelites performed the burnt offering only once a day (in the morning), as is reflected in 2 Kings 16:15 and Ezekiel 46:13–15.²⁴ Thus this anachronism in Chronicles ascribes to Solomon a cultic notion in accordance with the cult of his own time in the Second Temple period, as well as what is related to Moses’ Tabernacle in the Torah.

- (2) Similarly, later on, the Chronicler names the Temple a “House of Sacrifice” (בֵּית זֶבַח; 2 Chr 7:12, an “addition” to 1 Kgs 9:3), an idiom that appears only here in the Hebrew Bible.²⁵ This was exactly the central purpose of the Tabernacle as articulated in Leviticus 1–7; 23, and Numbers 28–29. In other words, by adding this reference the Chronicler attempts to establish the continuity of Solomon’s Temple with Moses’ Tabernacle and with the Temple of his own time, which in fact fulfilled the same goals (e.g., Ezra 3:1–6; 6:3; Neh 10:33–34 [ET, 10:32–33]).²⁶ Indeed, “*this is established forever over Israel*” (לְעוֹלָם זֹאת עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל; 2 Chr 2:3 [ET, 2:4]) – for Moses’ and Solomon’s times as well as for the times of the Chronicler.

²³ This text is parallel to 1 Kgs 5:19a (ET, 5:5a); cf. also 2 Chr 1:18 (ET, 2:1). That the Temple is only a place for God’s *name*, is a well-known Deuteronomistic theological notion; see also, for example, Deut 12:5, 11; 1 Kgs 8:16 // 2 Chr 6:5–6; 1 Kgs 9:3 // 2 Chr 7:16. In Jer 7:10, 14 the prophet talks about הֵבִית אֲשֶׁר נִקְרָא שְׁמִי עָלָיו (“the house on which my name is called”).

²⁴ See also 2 Kgs 3:20. The same anachronistic notion appears in 1 Chr 16:40, where the Chronicler alters the text of 2 Sam 6:13, 17–18: He writes that David ordered Zadok, the priest, “to offer up burnt offerings to the Lord ... *each morning and evening*,” twice a day. Cf. B. A. Levine, *Numbers 21–36: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 4A (New York: Doubleday, 2000), pp. 397–398.

²⁵ Interestingly, the author of a Samaritan inscription from Mount Gerizim (no. 199) uses the equivalent Aramaic idiom: בֵּית דְּבָחָא; see B. Becking, “Do the Earliest Samaritan Inscriptions Already Indicate a Parting of the Ways?” in O. Lipschitz, G. N. Knoppers, and R. Albertz (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B. C. E.* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2007), pp. 213–222, esp. p. 217, no. 2.

²⁶ Cf. R. W. Klein, *2 Chronicles: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), pp. 33–34.

At this point the Chronicler takes the opportunity to praise the greatness of the Lord and his upcoming Temple: “And the house which I am about to build is great, for great is our God above all gods. But who is able to build him a house, when heaven and the highest of heavens cannot contain him? And who am I then to build him a house except [as a place] to burn sacrifice before him?” (2 Chr 2:4–5 [ET 2:5–6], an “addition”). Here the Chronicler reinforces the cultic functions of the Temple, which are common to Israelite and other ancient Near Eastern societies, while rejecting the common ancient belief that a temple is a residence of a god or goddess (e.g., Exod 15:17).²⁷ This theological view is similar to, and presumably influenced by, Exodus 15:11 and by Psalms 86:8, where the poets praise the greatness of God. It also echoes the notion expressed in 1 Kings 8:27, a text which the Chronicler copied into his writing: כִּי הֵאֱמַנְם יֵשֵׁב אֱלֹהִים עַל־הָאָרֶץ הִנֵּה הַשָּׁמַיִם וְשָׁמַיִם הַשָּׁמַיִם לֹא יִכְלְכֻלֹּךְ אֶף כִּי־בֵית הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר בִּנֵּיתִי (“But will God dwell [2 Chr 6:18 adds: “with people”] on earth? Even heaven and the highest of the heavens cannot contain you, how much less this house that I have built”); and by so-called Trito-Isaiah: כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה הַשָּׁמַיִם כִּסֵּאִי וְהָאָרֶץ רֵגְלִי אֵי־זֶה בֵּית אֲשֶׁר תִּבְנֶה לִּי וְאֵי־זֶה מְקוֹם מְנוּחָתִי (“Thus says the Lord, the heavens are my throne, and the earth is my footstool; where is the house that you build for me? And where is the place of my rest?” Isa 66:1).

- (3) Like the Tabernacle in the wilderness, whose plans, dimensions, and vessels were dictated in detail by the Lord himself (Exod 25–30), so too all the detailed plans of Solomon’s Temple and its vessels were delivered by the hand of the Lord to David who passed them on to Solomon, as previously mentioned (1 Chr 28:11–19). No such claim is made in Samuel-Kings, while the Chronicler uses the same word תְּבִנִית (“pattern”) for the plan of the Temple (1 Chr 28:11, 12, 18, 19) that is used in Exodus 25:9 (twice), and in 25:40, regarding the Tabernacle.²⁸ This word refers specifically to the plan of the Tabernacle or the Temple only in these two contexts in the entire Hebrew

²⁷ On this verse and its relation to Solomon’s Temple, see N. M. Sarna, *Exploring Exodus: The Heritage of Biblical Israel* (New York: Schocken, 1986), pp. 100–101.

²⁸ Cf. H. G. M. Williamson, “The Temple in the Books of Chronicles,” *Studies in Persian Period History and Historiography*, *Forschungen zum Alten Testament* 38 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), pp. 150–161, esp. pp. 157–158.

Bible.²⁹ Moreover, 2 Chr 2:13 [ET, 2:14] and Exod 31:4; 35:32, 33, 35 both use the same word: מחשבת (“design”).

- (4) The description of the skills attributed to the experienced craftsman in 2 Chronicles 2:6 (ET, 2:7) aligns with the description in Exodus 31:2–5 (compare also 35:30–35) of the skills of Bezalel, son of Uri, son of Hur, the chief craftsman endowed with divine wisdom who established Moses' Tabernacle. The Chronicler placed the words about Bezalel in the Torah, in the mouth of King Hiram of Tyre (in chiasitic order), to describe the skills of Huramabi:³⁰

Exodus 31:2–5	2 Chronicles 2:12–13 (ET, 2:13–14)
ראה קראתי בשם בצלאל בן־אורי בן־חור למטה יהודה ואמלא אתו רוח אלהים בחכמה ובתבונה ובדעת ובכל־ מלאכה <u>לחשב מחשבת לעשות זהב וכסף</u> <u>ובנחשת ובחרשת אבן</u> למלאת ובחרשת עץ לעשות בכל־מלאכה	ועתה שלחתי איש־חכם יודע בינה <u>לחורם אבי בן־אשה מִרְבֵּנֹת דָן ואביו איש־צרי</u> <u>יודע לעשות זהב־וכסף בנחשת</u> בברזל באבנים ובעצים . . . <u>ולחשב כל־מחשבת</u> אשר ינתן־לו
See I have called by name Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. I have filled him with divine spirit making him a <i>skillful and ingenious</i> <i>expert</i> in all kinds of workmanship; <u>to devise skillful designs, to work in</u> <u>gold and silver and bronze</u>, and in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood for work in every craft.^a	Now I send you a <i>skillful and ingenious</i> <i>expert</i>, Hiramabi, He is son of a Danite woman^b and his father a Tyrian; he is [a man] . . . trained <u>to work in gold</u> <u>and silver, bronze, iron, stone, and</u> <u>wood</u> . . . and <u>to devise</u> any kind of <u>skillful design</u> that may be assigned to him.

^a Note that Solomon's letter to Hiram reads as follows (2 Chr 2:6 [ET, 2:7]): "Now send me a skillful man to work in gold . . . purple, **crimson**, and **blue**." Hiram's reply to Solomon (vv. 12–13, [ET, 2:13–14]) reads in chiasitic order, as follows: "Now I have sent a skillful man . . . who knows how to work in gold . . . purple, **blue**, fine linen, and **crimson**."

^b On the change of "Hiram" in Kings to "Hiramabi" in 2 Chr 2:13–14 (2:14–15), and on the ascription of Hiramabi's mother to Dan, rather than Naphtali as in 1 Kgs 7:13–14, see the valuable insights of Williamson, "The Temple in the Books of Chronicles," *Studies in Persian Period History and Historiography*, p. 158. Note that some translate אבי חורם as "my master Huram."

²⁹ תְּבִנִית does, however, appear elsewhere to refer to the pattern of the altar of the Lord in Josh 22:28, the pattern of the altar of Tiglath-pileser that Ahaz copied (2 Kgs 16:10), the היכל (in this context "palace") in Ps 144:12; elsewhere it is used of idols or other images.

³⁰ On the historians' method of expressing their own views via a speech, prayer or letter, see Kalimi, "Placing the Chronicler in His Own Historical Context," pp. 182–183.

That is to say, the artistic work of Solomon's Temple by Hiramabi was similar to and in accordance with the description of that in Moses' Tabernacle by Bezalel.³¹

- (5) The Chronicler does not include the text of 1 Kings 6:31–32, which describes the *doors* that separated the Holy Place from the inner sanctum, the Holy of the Holies (דביר). Instead, he anachronistically adds that Solomon's Temple had a veil/drape/curtain (פרכת; 2 Chr 3:14), which separated the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. This reflects on the one hand what is mentioned in the Torah regarding the Tabernacle (Exod 26:31–33; 36:35), and on the other hand what existed in the Second Temple.³² So the Chronicler creates continuity and consistency between the Israelite sanctuaries for all times, implying that they all had a veil: the Tabernacle of the wilderness period, the First Temple of the monarchic period, and the Second Temple of his own era, the Persian period.

However, it should be noted that later on the Chronicler, for whatever reason, does include from his *Vorlage* a reference to the doors just mentioned: Similar to the account in 1 Kings 7:50b, והפתות לדלתות הבית הפנימי לקדש הקדשים לדלתי הבית להיכל זהב ("and the hinges, both for the doors of the inner house, the most holy place, and for the doors of the house, namely, of the Temple, were of gold"), the Chronicler writes almost the same thing in 2 Chronicles 4:22b, ופתח הבית לדלתותיו הפנימיות לקדש הקדשים ודלתי הבית להיכל זהב ("and the entrance of the house, the inner doors for the most holy place, and the doors of the house of the temple, were of gold"). Thus, some scholars (for example, Imanuel Benzinger, Wilhelm Rudolph, and Rudolph Mosis) consider 2 Chronicles 4:22b to be a secondary addition from "the Second Chronicler,"³³ but they do not explain why the supposed "Second Chronicler" should add such a contradictory phrase here. As I have detailed elsewhere, to some extent the Chronicler was not as systematic in his reshaping of ancient Israelite history as is expected by Western scholars trained according to the Greco-Roman desire for complete consistency.³⁴

³¹ See Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 252, 255, 273, 391.

³² See 1 Macc 1:22; 4:51; Josephus Flavius, *Jewish War* 5.5.5–6; Mishnah, *Yoma* 5:1; Matt 27:51 // Luke 23:45; Mark 15:38, and the detailed discussion and references to primary and secondary sources by Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 390–392.

³³ See Benzinger, *Die Bücher der Chronik: Erklärt*, pp. 88–89; Rudolph, *Chronikbücher*, p. 205; Mosis, *Untersuchungen zur Theologie des chronistischen Geschichtswerkes*, p. 137, note 38.

³⁴ See Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 381–385.

- (6) The exact location of the Temple in Jerusalem is lacking in the text of 1 Kings 6. The Chronicler adds the location, and identifies it with the site of the binding of Isaac (Gen 22:2) and the place of the altar erected by David (2 Sam 24:25 // 1 Chr 21:26–22:1): “Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord appeared to David his father, in the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite” (2 Chr 3:1). Most likely, the Chronicler’s aim was to bestow special antiquity and holiness on the Solomonic Temple in order to enhance his own contemporary Temple, which was built at the same location. Also, perhaps he is disputing here with the Samaritans regarding the antiquity and sanctity of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem – Mount Moriah – over Mount Gerizim.³⁵
- (7) According to 1 Kings 5:23 (ET, 5:9), Hiram, king of Tyre, agreed to Solomon’s request to supply him with cedar and cypress trees for the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem. He told Solomon that he would send the trees from Phoenicia to the Land of Israel by sea: “I will make them into rafts to go by sea *to the place* that you indicate. I will have them broken up there for you to take away.” In this text, no mention is made of the name of the specific port on the coast of the Land of Israel where the trees were to be unloaded. The Chronicler, however, has inserted the name of that place: “on the sea at Joppa” (2 Chr 2:15 [ET, 2:16]), apparently in light of Ezra 3:7, which describes the preparations for the building of Zerubbabel’s Temple.³⁶ Moreover, 1 Kings 5:24–25 (ET, 5:10–11) recounts that in

³⁵ Elsewhere I have discussed this issue in detail; see I. Kalimi, “The Land of Moriah, Mount Moriah and the Site of Solomon’s Temple in Biblical Historiography,” *HTR* 83 (1990), pp. 345–362 (for a revised version of the article see my “The Land / Mount Moriah, and the Site of the Jerusalem Temple,” *Early Jewish Exegesis and Theological Controversy: Studies in Scriptures in the Shadow of Internal and External Controversies*, Jewish and Christian Heritage Series 2; [Assen: Van Gorcum (now under: E. J. Brill, Leiden), 2002], pp. 9–32).

³⁶ The addition of the place-name here was not merely a technical completion produced by matching a narrative in a similar context in another scripture. It is reasonable to assume that it also resulted from the geographical proximity of the port of Joppa to Jerusalem, closer than any other port along the shores of the Land of Israel. It is also possible that this emendation reveals a certain degree of anachronism that reflects the geopolitical reality of the Chronicler’s own days (ca. 400–375 BCE), because during the Persian period Joppa was controlled by Sidon. See in detail, Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, p. 80.

return for the lumber supplied by Hiram, Solomon gave him “wheat as food for his household and . . . oil.”³⁷ The Chronicler expanded the list of agricultural products Solomon supplied to Hiram, adding “wine” (יין; 2 Chr 2:9, 14 [ET, 2:10, 15]),³⁸ again, probably on the basis of the story of the establishment of Zerubbabel’s Temple in Ezra 3:7 (משתה):³⁹

1 Kings 5:22–25 (ET, 5:8–11)	2 Chronicles 2:9, 15 (ET, 2:10, 16)	Ezra 3:7
I will do all you desire concerning cedar and cypress. My servants will bring them down from Lebanon to the sea, and I will make them into rafts to go <i>by sea to the place you indicate</i> . I will have them broken up there for you to take away . . . So Hiram gave Solomon timber of cedar and timber of cypress . . . and Solomon gave Hiram . . . wheat as food for his household, and . . . beaten oil	I will give your Servants. . . beaten wheat . . . barley . . . <i>wine</i> . . . and oil . . . We will cut wood from Lebanon, and we will bring it to you as rafts <i>by sea to Joppa</i> , and you will take it up to Jerusalem.	They gave money to the hewers and carpenters; and food , <i>drink</i> , and oil to the Sidonians and Tyrians, to bring cedar trees from Lebanon <i>to the sea, to Joppa</i> , according to the authorization that they had from Cyrus, king of Persia.

³⁷ This is similar to a statement by the Egyptian official Wen-Amon (ca. 1100 BCE) who recounts that when he asked Zakar-Baal the ruler of Byblos for cedar for the barque of Amon, Zakar-Baal brought out from his court-records the scrolls recording the payments and gifts given to his ancestors by the kings of Egypt in exchange for the Phoenician cedar and other products; See J. A. Wilson, “The Journey of Wen-Amon to Phoenicia,” in J. B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (ANET), 3rd ed. with suppl. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 25b–29a, esp. p. 27a.

³⁸ The Chronicler also repeated the list of products in 2 Chr 2:14 (ET, 2:15) in chiasmic order: “Now, therefore, *the wheat, barley, oil, and wine* that my lord has spoken of – let him send it to his servants.”

³⁹ Sometimes the word יין is mentioned along with משתה; see Isa 5:12; Dan 1:5, 8, 16; Esth 5:6; 7:2, 7, 8. Based on the LXX version of Kings, Williamson suggests that “the Chronicler may have been following a different *Vorlage* at this point”; see Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, p. 200. However, since the LXX version of Kings mentions neither the “wine” nor “barley” that appear in MT Chronicles, the identical amount of oil occurring in LXX Kings and in MT Chronicles seems insufficient for such an assumption.

These additions and alterations in 2 Chronicles 2:9, 14–15 (ET, 2:10, 15–16) expand the analogy between the texts regarding the preparations for the construction of the Solomon's Temple and the preparations for the building of Zerubbabel's Temple. That is, what took place later in the building of the Second Temple had already taken place earlier in the building of the First Temple.⁴⁰

- (8) The Chronicler alters his *Vorlage* regarding the *cherubim* that appear in 1 Kings 6:23–29. His description of them in 2 Chronicles 3:10–13 is much abridged compared to their description in Kings. Specifically, he reshapes the dimensions of their wings (1 Kgs 6:24–25, 27) in the literary form of “from general to specific and back to general,” which is a common feature of his writing style.⁴¹ Perhaps because the *kapporet* and the *cherubim* were totally absent from the Second Temple sanctuary, the Chronicler did not find it necessary to mention every detail about them that appears in Kings. The expression *בית הכפרת* (“the room of/with the *kapporet*”) in 1 Chronicles 28:11, which the Chronicler appropriately uses for the inner sanctum of Solomon's Temple, does not refer to the content of the room in the Temple of his time, as Ralph W. Klein assumes.⁴² Instead, by this term the Chronicler may attempt to relate Solomon's Temple to Moses' Tabernacle,⁴³ or it is also conceivable that *בית הכפרת* is simply a textual corruption of *בית הפרכת* (“the room behind the Veil”), meaning the Holy of Holies (cf. Exod 26:33; Lev 16:2; *Ben Sira* 50:5). Such a mistaken metathesis of letters is not rare in the transmission of the Hebrew Bible text.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ See Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 62–63, 79–81, see also 256, 377. Williamson is of the opposite opinion, that the author of Ezra 3:7 used 2 Chr 2:9, 14–15 (ET, 2:10, 15–16); see H. G. M. Williamson, “The Composition of Ezra 1–6,” *Studies in Persian Period History and Historiography*, pp. 244–270, esp. p. 265. However, I am convinced that Ezra and Nehemiah were compiled and arranged before the book of Chronicles, and that the author of the latter made use of the former; see in detail Kalimi, *ibid.*, pp. 8–9. In support of this, note that it is more likely that the Chronicler would replace the less common term *מִשְׁתָּה* (which appears forty-six times in the Hebrew Bible) with the more common term *יין* (141 times) than the other way around.

⁴¹ See Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 378–379.

⁴² See Klein, *1 Chronicles: A Commentary*, p. 525.

⁴³ Compare Dirksen, *1 Chronicles*, p. 339.

⁴⁴ For a discussion and examples of this phenomenon, see Kalimi, *Metathesis in the Hebrew Bible*.

- (9) In the inner sanctum of the Second Temple the Ark of the Covenant was no longer present.⁴⁵ Therefore, in 2 Chronicles 3:8 the Chronicler omits the information about the ark that stood in the inner sanctum, as pointed out in 1 Kings 6:19b: “And the sanctuary he prepared in the house inside, *to set there the ark of the covenant of the Lord.*” In the parallel text, 2 Chronicles 3:8, he writes: “And he made the house of the holy of holies, its length was . . .” Most likely, the Chronicler could not completely ignore the holiest item of the Temple – the Ark of the Covenant – but at the same time he also did not want to provide all the details of this item that did not exist anymore in the Temple of his day. To have described all the details of the Ark would have even more strongly highlighted its absence from the Second Temple. Therefore, the Chronicler simply minimized the Ark’s description in his writing.
- (10) In order to avoid the sharp contrast between a poorly built Second Temple and the glorious, luxurious building of the First/Solomon’s Temple (Hag 2:1–9; Ezra 3:12–13),⁴⁶ the Chronicler omits some descriptions that appear in his *Vorlage*. For example, he omits the texts of 1 Kings 6:4–10, 14–18, 28–30, which describe the richness of Solomon’s Temple with its gold, cedar, and cypress trees, as well as the sophisticated construction of its walls and windows. Except for the abundance of gold, these elements also were not present in Moses’ Tabernacle, so their omission is again consistent with the Chronicler’s focus on the continuity between these three sanctuaries.
- (11) The Chronicler omits the text of 1 Kings 6:7, “And the house, when it was being built, was built of stone prepared before it was brought there; so that *there was neither hammer nor ax nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was being built.*” If he were to cite this text in his book, it would contradict his own notes about the collection of iron and nails for the Temple building in places such as 1 Chronicles 22:2–3: “And David prepared iron in abundance for the nails for the doors of the gates, and for the joining; and bronze in abundance beyond weighing” (see also 2 Chr 3:9, both “additions”). Moreover,

⁴⁵ See Kalimi, “The Land / Mount Moriah, and the Site of the Jerusalem Temple,” pp. 28–29; idem, *Fighting Over the Bible*, pp. 191, 208–211.

⁴⁶ See in detail Kalimi, “The Land / Mount Moriah, and the Site of the Jerusalem Temple,” pp. 27–28.

according to 2 Chronicles 2:12–13 [ET, 13–14], Hiramabi, mentioned above, who worked to design various things in Solomon's Temple, was trained also to work with iron. The latter does not appear in the parallel text in Exodus 31:2–5 that describes the training of Bezalel (see §V, 4).

- (12) The building of Solomon's palace took thirteen years, almost double the seven years spent building the Temple (1 Kgs 6:38; 7:1). This eclipses the importance and centrality of the Temple among Solomon's construction activities, an issue that the Chronicler most likely wished to avoid. Thus although he mentions the palace of Solomon (2 Chr 7:11; 8:1 // 1 Kgs 9:1, 10; "House of the Forest of Lebanon," 2 Chr 9:16, 20 // 1 Kgs 10:17, 21), he omits a detailed description of the thirteen years it took to build (1 Kgs 7:1–12), in order to highlight the seven years required to build the Temple. After all, the Second Temple in *Yehud Medinta* was considered to stand in continuity with the First Temple and its cult, but there was no continuity of the royal palace in the Chronicler's times (although David's descendants – such as Anani [1 Chr 3:23] – still survived and even held high positions).⁴⁷

In sum, it is inaccurate to assert, "The most that can be said for certain is that the omitted details of the Temple building lie somehow *outside of [the] Chr[onicler]'s interests*."⁴⁸ The Chronicler obviously had a very great interest in the Temple, to which he devotes a great deal of attention. The omissions, like the additions and emendations, serve to harmonize the accounts of Solomon's Temple with those of Moses' Tabernacle in the Torah and Zerubbabel's Temple in the Persian period. In such a way, he also enhances the holiness and antiquity of his own contemporary sanctuary. Nonetheless, in two cases he faced difficult choices, that is, regarding the cherubim and the Ark of the Covenant (see (8) and (9)). Both of these are detailed in the accounts of Moses' Tabernacle and were present in Solomon's Temple, but were absent from the Second Temple. Here he could not entirely ignore these central furnishings of the Temple, but downplayed them in order not to highlight this lack of continuity between the three sanctuaries. These are neither accidental omissions from Chronicles, nor late additions to Kings, but rather reflect the

⁴⁷ See Kalimi, "Placing the Chronicler in His Own Historical Context," pp. 186, 189–190.

⁴⁸ S. L. McKenzie, *The Chronicler's Use of the Deuteronomistic History*, Harvard Semitic Monographs 33 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), p. 85 (italics mine).

Chronicler's consistent theological approach, within his own historical context in the Second Temple period.⁴⁹

VI. THE DIVINE APPROVAL OF THE TEMPLE AND ITS UNCEASING EXISTENCE

1. *The Divine Approval of the Temple*

Prior to the building of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, “the glory of the Lord” dwelled on Mount Sinai, and from there the Lord called Moses and spoke to him: וישכן כבוד־יהוה על־הר סיני ויכסהו הענן ששת ימים ויקרא אל־משה ביום השביעי מתוך הענן (*“The glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud”*; Exod 24:16).⁵⁰ When the Tabernacle was erected, ויכס הענן את־אהל מועד וכבוד יהוה מלא את־המשכן (*“the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle”*; Exod 40:34), and from there God called Moses and spoke to him: ויקרא אל־משה וידבר יהוה אליו מאהל מועד לאמר . . . (*“The Lord called Moses and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying . . .”*; Lev 1:1). Now when the Temple is built, “a cloud filled the house of the Lord” and “the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord,” as described in 1 Kings 8:10–11. Indeed, the latter text in Kings describes the unambiguous sign of the divine acceptance and approval of Solomon's Temple:

והענן מלא את בית יהוה ולא יכלו הכהנים לעמוד לשרת מפני הענן כי מלא כבוד יהוה את בית יהוה.

And the cloud filled the house of the Lord, and the priests could not stand to serve because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord.

This description of theophany is especially close to the one recounted in Exodus 40:33b–35 – that is, the divine acceptance and approval of Moses' Tabernacle:

ויכל משה את המלאכה. ויכס הענן את אהל מועד וכבוד יהוה מלא את המשכן. ולא יכל משה לבוא אל אהל מועד כי שכן עליו הענן וכבוד יהוה מלא את המשכן.

⁴⁹ For other theologically motivated omissions, particularly the hints to the sins of Solomon in 1 Kings, see §VI, 2.

⁵⁰ On the “glory” (כבוד) of the Lord in the Hebrew Bible, see S. Z. Aster, *The Unbeatable Light: Melammu and Its Biblical Parallels*, *Alter Orient und Altes Testament* 384 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2012), pp. 258–336; P. de Vries, *The Kābôd of YHWH in the Old Testament: With Particular Reference to the Book of Ezekiel*, transl. A. Thomson, *Studia Semitica Neerlandica* 65 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2016).

So Moses **completed** the work. *Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle. Thus Moses was not able to enter into the Tent of Meeting, because the cloud resided on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle.*

In 2 Chronicles 5:13d–14, the Chronicler copied the text of 1 Kings 8:10–11, with minor alterations. But it seems that this clear-cut sign of divine approval and acceptance was not sufficient for the Chronicler. He went one step further and presented an additional sign for the divine approval of the Temple. At the end of Solomon's prayer, he added the following text to his *Vorlage* in Kings:

וככלות שלמה להתפלל והאש ירדה מהשמים ותאכל העלה והזבחים וכבוד יהוה מלא את־הבית ולא יכלו הכהנים לבוא אל־בית יהוה כִּי־מלא כבוד־יהוה את־בית יהוה וכל בני ישראל ראים בִּרְדַת האש וכבוד יהוה על־הבית ויכרעו אפים ארצה על־הרצפה וישתחוו ויהודות ליהוה כי טוב כי לעולם חסדו

Now when Solomon **finished** praying, *fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house. And the priests could not enter the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house.* And when all the people of Israel saw how *the fire and the glory of the Lord came down upon the house*, they bowed with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord, saying, for he is good; for his loving kindness endures forever. [2 Chr 7:1–3, except for verse 1a, which is parallel to 1 Kgs 8:54, verses 7:1b–3 are “additions”]

Thus, according to Chronicles, Solomon's Temple receives double divine approval: once by the cloud/glory of the Lord that filled the Temple (2 Chr 5:13b–14), and again by the heavenly fire that burned the sacrifices (2 Chr 7:1–3). There are in fact three essential additional elements in 2 Chronicles 7:1–3 not present in its *Vorlage*:

- (a) The Chronicler's insertion that “*fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices*” (2 Chr 7:1b), creates another analogy between the holiness and divine acceptance of Solomon's Temple and that of Moses' Tabernacle, as described in Leviticus 9:24:

ותצא אש מלפני יהוה ותאכל על־המזבח את־העלה ואת־החלבים וירא כל־העם וירגזו ויפלו על־פניהם.

And there came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed the burnt-offering and the fat upon the altar; when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces.

This vision of heavenly fire, which is another form of theophany, is a sign of divine acceptance. This notion is also clear from the Chronicler's addition in 1 Chronicles 21:26 to his *Vorlage* of 2 Samuel 24:25,

where he states that David built an altar to the Lord at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, the site of the future Temple, and offered there burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, and called upon the Lord. Then the Lord “*answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of the burnt offering*” (וַיַּעֲנֵהוּ בְּאֵשׁ מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם עַל מִזְבֵּחַ הָעֹלָה) – a clear-cut designation of the future site of the Temple. It is also obvious from the case of the Prophet Elijah on Mount Carmel that the fire from heaven descending upon the sacrifice indicates divine acceptance (1 Kgs 18:36–39): וַתִּפֹּל אֲשֵׁרֵיהֶם וַתֹּאכַל אֶת־הָעֹלָה וְאֶת־הָאֲבָנִים וְאֶת־הָעֹפֶר וְאֶת־הָעֶפֶר (“Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt-offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench,” verse 38).

Thus, the Chronicler compares the divine acceptance of Solomon’s Temple’s and its holiness with that of Moses’ Tabernacle; and the approval of Solomon’s altar with those of the altars of Moses, David, and Elijah. This is, indeed, the highest level of holiness that one could bestow on any sacred place. Obviously, by creating these analogies, the Chronicler bestows particular holiness also on the site of his own (Second) Temple.⁵¹

- (b) The Chronicler repeats, in chiasmic order, the statements regarding the glory of the Lord that had filled the Temple, mentioned in 2 Chronicles 5:13b–14 (// 1 Kgs 8:10–11) and 2 Chronicles 7:1–2: “And the priests could not enter the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord’s house.” This repetition constructs an *inclusio* in Chronicles that ties together all the pieces between the two boundaries of 2 Chronicles 5:13b–14 and 7:1–2.⁵² Since *Form ist nie ohne Gehalt* (“form never exists without content”),⁵³ this repetition also stresses a complete analogy between Solomon’s Temple and Moses’ Tabernacle as

⁵¹ On Solomon’s inauguration of the Temple, see Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 147–149, 386–387. It is worth noting that 2 Chr 7:9 also mentions the “inauguration of the altar” (חֲנֻכַּת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ), an idiom that appears in only one other context in the Hebrew Bible, namely Num 7:10, 11, 84, 88 (cf. Exod 29:37; both Priestly) regarding the altar of Moses’ Tabernacle. The Chronicler’s wording, therefore, may have been influenced by the Priestly literature. Perhaps he wished to stress that the inauguration of the altar was the most important part of the inauguration of the Temple and its vessels.

⁵² See in detail Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 299–300. This “chiasmic structure” is also noted by de Vries, *The Kābôd of YHWH in the Old Testament*, p. 230, *without referring to Kalimi*.

⁵³ See J. W. von Goethe, “Paralipomena,” *Gedenkausgabe der Werke, Briefe und Gespräche*, ed. E. Beutler (Zürich: Artemis, 1949), vol. 5, pp. 539–619, esp. p. 541.

recounted in Exodus 40:33b–35 and Leviticus 9:24, in which both are related to Moses' Tabernacle and complement each other.

- (c) In 2 Chronicles 7:3 the Chronicler states that when the Israelites saw the fire and the glory, *ויכרעו אפים ארצה על* . . . *וכל בני ישראל ראים* . . . *והרצפה וישתחוו והודות ליהוה כי טוב כי לעולם חסדו* (“*when all the sons of Israel saw . . . they bowed with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord, saying, for he is good; for his loving kindness endures forever*”). This is an “addition” to 1 Kings 8:54, where Solomon (alone) is said to have “bowed down” (*כרע*) *in prayer*: This statement is absent from 2 Chronicles 7:3, which instead affirms that the people “bowed down” (*כרע*) on their faces (lit. “noses”; *אפים*) *in response* to the fire and the glory. The latter is unparalleled in 1 Kings 8, but parallels the people's response to the fire in Leviticus 9:24: *וירא כל העם ויפלו על פניהם* (“*when all the people saw, they shouted with joy, and fell on their faces*”). A similar description appears in the case of Elijah on Mount Carmel: *וירא כל העם ויפלו על פניהם ויאמרו יהוה הוא* (“*And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God*”; 1 Kgs 18:39). In all three cases, the people's response to the fire is to fall on their faces and worship.

2. The Unceasing Existence of the Temple

The Chronicler omits the text in 1 Kings 6:11–13 that conditions the unceasing existence of the Temple on Solomon's religious behavior:

And the word of the Lord came to Solomon, saying: Concerning this house which you are building, *if you will walk* in my statutes, and execute my judgments, and keep all my commandments to walk in them; *then will I perform my word* with you, which I spoke to David your father; *and I will dwell among the people of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel*.

Since the First Temple was destroyed by the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar II, in 587/586 BCE (2 Kgs 25:9 // Jer 52:13; 2 Chr 36:19), the implication is that Solomon transgressed and did not walk in the statutes of the Lord. The Chronicler omits this text. For him, Solomon behaved perfectly in the sight of the Lord all his life (or, at least he wants Solomon to be remembered that way). He was an admirable, pious king, without any sin, in the monarchic era. Accordingly, throughout his work the Chronicler not only avoids mentioning Solomon's succession to the

throne as a result of court intrigues as recounted in 1 Kings 1, his brutal acts to establish his throne as recounted in 1 Kings 2:13–3:2, and his sins listed in 1 Kings 11:1–41; he omits the slightest hint of them. Consequently, he also omits the conditional divine promise regarding giving a long life to Solomon – who in fact did not have an unusually long life (2 Chr 1:12 compared with 1 Kgs 3:12–14) – and the hint of Solomon’s sins that appears in Nathan’s prophecy (1 Chr 17:13 compared with 2 Sam 7:14).⁵⁴ The only exception appears in 2 Chronicles 7:17–22, where the Chronicler cites (with some changes) the parallel text of 1 Kings 9:4–9 that connects the continuous existence of the Davidic kingdom and the Temple with Solomon’s and the Israelites’ religious behavior.

VII. CONCLUSION

Samuel-Kings and Chronicles discuss God’s rejection of David’s intent to build the Temple, though offering differing explanations for it. In both these historiographical complexes, God’s approval of the building of the Temple by Solomon, and its completion and inauguration, are the heart of Solomon’s story. Both Kings and Chronicles dedicate the vast majority of their writings about Solomon’s reign to detailing the preparations for the building of the Temple, its construction, divine approval, and inauguration. This chapter points out the main features of these subjects as they are described in the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles from a historiographical viewpoint, and considers their theological implications.

The Chronicler dedicates about fourteen chapters to the Temple as a whole. Generally, he bases his description of the Temple’s construction on the book of Kings, but the description of the actual building – fourteen verses total – is much shorter than that in Kings. He connects the Temple site with the site of the binding of Isaac in Genesis. The Chronicler integrates into his description, on the one hand, some elements from the existing Temple of his own time – Zerubbabel’s Temple or the Second Temple – with which he was familiar; and on the other hand, he also harmonizes and combines some elements from the description of Moses’ Tabernacle in the Torah.⁵⁵ By doing so, the Chronicler formulates a

⁵⁴ See Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 45–46.

⁵⁵ According to 1 Kgs 8:4 and its parallel, 2 Chr 5:5, the Tabernacle finally had been deposited in Solomon’s Temple.

different Temple of Solomon, a new one, which in fact never existed in the history of the ancient Israelite monarchic period. Because the Temple was the center of the Jewish community in *Yehud Medinta* and its most important institution in the Persian period, the Chronicler attempts to bestow on it signs of antiquity and holiness that started in the time of Moses and continued via Solomon's Temple, until his own time in the first quarter of the fourth century BCE.

According to the Chronicler, Solomon completely fulfilled the divine task and the testament of his father regarding the Temple. He succeeded where his father failed, and built a Temple whose holiness was comparable to that of the Tabernacle. The Temple building and its divine approval were considered, in both biblical historiographies, the greatest accomplishment of King Solomon. Nevertheless, in Chronicles this picture became even bolder than in Kings. For generations to come, Solomon is to be remembered not only for his great wisdom and wealth, but first and foremost as the builder of the first permanent Temple of the Lord. Solomon was blessed with wisdom and wealth not only for their own sake or for civil governing, but mostly in order to prepare him to build the Temple. This achievement ensured Solomon's eternal place in Israelite/Jewish culture, and later on also in Christian as well as Muslim traditions.

CHAPTER 14

Writing and Rewriting the Story of Solomon

This chapter summarizes and synthesizes the various chapters of the book (§I), then draws out some further conclusions regarding the portrayals of Solomon in the biblical historical literature, the ways these overlap and diverge between the early and late biblical historical writings, and the broader differences between the methods and approaches employed in each of these historiographical works (§II).

I. SUMMARY AND SYNTHESIS

Following the introduction, which details the state of research, goals and methods of this volume, [Chapter Two](#) discusses the availability and nature of the sources concerning Solomon. No direct epigraphic evidence explicitly referring to Solomon or his reign has so far been discovered, while the other archaeological findings are highly controversial. In particular, it is sharply disputed whether the Iron Age II monumental structures found at various sites in the Land of Israel should be dated to the time of Solomon in the tenth century BCE, or to the later period of the divided monarchy, in the ninth century. In general, the archaeological data is problematic and the biblical texts remain the essential basis for any description of King Solomon and his period.

Due in part to this paucity of direct extrabiblical evidence, some have challenged the legitimacy of reconstructing any history, culture, and literature of ancient Israel based on biblical sources. [Chapter Three](#), therefore, summarizes and critiques the arguments of a group of scholars (so-called minimalists, revisionists, nihilists, or deconstructionists) who reject the very notion of a United Monarchy under David and Solomon,

deny that they ruled any extended kingdom – if they ever existed at all – and conclude that most or all of the biblical records concerning their lives and reigns are late, ideological fictions only produced long after the tenth century. Though the *main* purpose of this volume is not to reconstruct “the historical Solomon,” nevertheless such foundational challenges cannot be ignored, and this chapter presents a detailed repudiation of the assumptions, methods, and conclusions of the minimalists.

Chapter Four then offers a historical evaluation of Solomon’s Kingdom, focused on four case studies – regarding Solomon’s Temple, the size of tenth-century Jerusalem, the nature of David and Solomon’s empire, and the reference to Solomon’s harem. It explores what a more reasonable and balanced approach to the biblical sources should entail. In the end, while the biblical texts certainly include some late and legendary material, and must on any account be carefully and critically evaluated, the general picture of Solomon presented in the early biblical historiography (Samuel-Kings) is broadly plausible, and the wholesale rejections of its reliability are unfounded.

Furthermore, though the discussion in the rest of this volume does not *depend* on this conclusion, the remaining chapters also demonstrate that various aspects of the account of Solomon in Samuel-Kings make better sense when understood as reflecting a compilation of earlier sources, than as freely invented fictions of a later age. Therefore, the other nine chapters of the book all focus on how Solomon is portrayed in particular texts of the Hebrew Bible, in comparison with one another and the surviving extrabiblical ancient Near Eastern sources – as far as the latter are available. The discussion in **Chapter Seven**, “Solomon’s Birth and Names in the Second Temple Period Literature,” refers also to some extrabiblical Jewish sources from the Second Temple era.

Chapters Five and Six discuss the birth story of Solomon and his two names (2 Sam 12:24–25) within their biblical and ancient Near Eastern contexts. **Chapter Five** demonstrates that these verses are an essential component of the comprehensive narrative in 2 Samuel 10–12. Although the major focus of 2 Samuel 10–12 is King David, not Solomon, their stories are inseparable. The comprehensive narrative appears within the so-called Succession Narrative (2 Sam 9–20 + 1 Kgs 1–2), and is correlated in its political-historical contexts in the tenth century BCE. Thus, this chapter meticulously explores the biblical-historical setting of Solomon’s birth story, and its unity and integration within the immediately surrounding biblical texts, while challenging various unconfirmed assumptions in the biblical scholarship: that the account in 2 Samuel 10–12 has

been heavily edited in the late monarchic period or even much later, and that originally Solomon was actually the first child of Bathsheba, rather than the second born, as the biblical text states.

In short, the account of David's adultery with Bathsheba and its condemnation by Nathan, as well as the birth of two sons to Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:10–12:25), have long troubled commentators and historians. Scholars who adopt the redaction-history (*Redaktionsgeschichte*) approach have often denied the text's unity, if not its coherence. They have regularly attempted to divide 2 Samuel 10–12 into multiple layers from different hands, suggesting that originally Solomon was not Bathsheba's second son but rather her first, and therefore illegitimate (a bastard). The birth and death of the first son, claim these scholars, is just a later cover-story that attempts to hide that "fact."

However, while the present text has probably used preexisting sources (e.g., regarding the war with the Ammonites), such redactional reconstructions are not only unfounded, but also overlook numerous thematic, literary, structural, stylistic, and theological features that span the whole of 2 Samuel 10–12, demonstrate authorial intent, and unify the main core of the composition. These include the literary and theological frameworks of the narrative units, and the various literary techniques and structures by which the author/editor sophisticatedly combined the units with each other in the comprehensive narrative as a whole. In particular, the narrative is structured in a manner that moves from the external matters at the periphery of the Israelite kingdom to the internal and intimate matters at the heart of it – in the capital Jerusalem and in the king's palace – making the birth of Solomon the centre and climax of the whole account. This is framed within multiple forms of *inclusio*, and structured around five concentric circled stories, each of which leads to, or is the result of, the other. Finally, the whole sequence in 11:1–12:25 is embedded within a frame that opens and closes with war stories (2 Sam 10:1–19 and 12:26–31), and conforms to a theological structure that closely parallels and inverts that seen in 1 Samuel 15, establishing a clear contrast between Saul's failure and David's rehabilitation. This confirms the text's essential unity, authorial intent, and theological coherence.

The birth story (report, or announcement) of Solomon in the book of Samuel is the only one of its kind in the entire historiography of the ancient Israelite kingdoms: There is no explicit account of the birth of Saul, and nothing at all regarding the birth of David or any later king of Judah or Israel. Also, David had many other sons from his several wives, but none of their birth stories have been recounted. Was there any

particular reason to recount Solomon's birth story from among those of all David's sons and from among those of all the Israelite and Judahite kings? Moreover, though the birth name of the newborn child was "Shlomoh (/ Solomon)," he received an additional name by the divine messenger, Nathan: "Yedidyah (/ Jedidiah)," which is tied to the phrase "and the Lord loved him" (12:24–25). What is the purpose and meaning of this name and the accompanying phrase? [Chapter Six](#) investigates these issues within three complementary settings: their immediate context (2 Sam 10–12); their wider context in the story of Solomon's rise to power (1 Kgs 1–2); and their parallels in comparable ancient Near Eastern texts that recount the claims to the throne by usurpers and kings outside the royal line. The latter attempted to legitimize their kingship by introducing themselves as beloved of or chosen by sponsor divinities, sometimes taking a new throne-name. This historical and literary phenomenon is found in Mesopotamian, Anatolian, Egyptian, and Persian writings. It appears in the Sumerian, Old Babylonian, and Neo-Assyrian sources (regarding Sargon the Great of Akkad and Sargon II of Assyria); in the Hittite texts (regarding Hattušili III); in the Egyptian writings (regarding Hatshepsut and other pharaohs); and in Persian inscriptions (regarding Xerxes I).

The comparative-historical discussion in this chapter reveals that in ancient Israel and its surrounding cultures, both Semitic and non-Semitic, one method of self-legitimation by usurpers was to claim that they enjoyed divine favor already at a very early stage of life. It seems that there was a tradition of such royal apologies with common core features, which were shared among the ancient Near Eastern cultures. This is seen especially in the cases of Sargon the Great (and/or Sargon II) and Hattušili III, who both emphasized patronage by Ištar ("Ištar loved me"), despite Ištar not being a native Hittite deity. That Sargon the Great traditions were widely known in Hatti Land supports the conclusion that the connection is deliberate, and provides a rough parallel to the similar motif in 2 Samuel ("the Lord loved him").

Against the background of these ancient Near Eastern parallels, the birth story and additional name of Solomon – Yedidyah – in 2 Samuel 12:24d–25 are seen to be closely related to Solomon's accession recounted in 1 Kings 1–2. In fact, the former story in Samuel serves as exposition, legitimization, and justification for the latter story in Kings, which also mentions the divine choosing of Solomon. Additionally, the birth story of Solomon in 2 Samuel 10–12 and his coronation and establishment in 1 Kings 1–2 frame the Succession Narrative, which opens and closes with

stories about Solomon.¹ Also, it is the same Nathan who gave the name Yedidyah to Bathsheba's second son and communicated the divine love and protection to him in the first place (2 Sam 12:24d–25), who later supported Solomon against his rival Adonijah (1 Kgs 1). Actually, Bathsheba, Nathan, and Solomon only appear in these two parts of the Succession Narrative.

The concept of divine love and this way of justifying a usurper in Israel could have been developed either independently or – more likely – influenced by any of the aforementioned surrounding cultures, and as such it reflects the integration of this story within the ancient Near Eastern cultures. If this method of justifying a usurper in Israel was indeed influenced by other culture(s), presumably the concept found its way from Mesopotamia to Israel: The usurpation of Solomon, which is explained as the preference of the Lord (*“for it was his from the Lord,”* 1 Kgs 2:15, see also 24), is broadly parallel to that of Sargon the Great's usurpation, which is explained as the preference of the gods, especially Inanna/Ištar. Moreover, the name Yedidyah is politically and ideologically comparable to the name Šarru-kīn (Sargon), and the phrase “the Lord loved him” is parallel to the phrase “Ištar loved me” in Sargon's Birth Legend. In both cases the intention is to bestow a divine legitimization on the usurper (Solomon, or Sargon the Great / Sargon II). That is not necessarily to say that the Succession Narrative is drawing on these specific texts, but that it reflects the same or similar well-known traditions. In principle, these could also have found their way to Israel through the Hittite apology of Hattušili III, which was itself influenced by the Mesopotamian ones, but the Hittite apology does not refer explicitly to a new name. In any case, the legitimization of Solomon in 2 Samuel 12:24d–25 is fully in line with broader ancient Near Eastern traditions, rather than being a strange fragment unrelated to its context. In other words, the naming of Solomon Yedidyah, and the confirmation that “the Lord loved him,” are part and parcel of Solomon's succession narrative, which provides divine legitimization for his usurpation described in the first two chapters of Kings.

Very different portrayals of Solomon's birth and names are found in a number of biblical books from the Second Temple period, and in some apocryphal and pseudepigraphical writings, as well as those by Josephus Flavius. As discussed in [Chapter Seven](#), the book of Chronicles never

¹ 2 Sam 9 functions as an exposition for the relation of David and Mephibosheth as well as the story of Ziba and Mephibosheth within Absalom's story in 2 Sam 16:1–4; 19:25–31 (ET, 19:24–30).

mentions the name Yedidyah, nor does the name appear in the *Wisdom of Solomon*, the *Testament of Solomon*, or even in Josephus' writings. By contrast, this name is alluded to in Psalms and Nehemiah, and there are wordplays on it and the name Shlomoh in *Ben Sira*.

Moreover, Chronicles also does not discuss Solomon's birth. It simply includes him among Bathsheba's sons (here called "Bathshua"), implying that he was born to David under regular circumstances. Here the list of Bathsheba's children is framed according to a literary scheme of "three-four," with Solomon located in the climactic fourth position. He is also listed in the exact middle of the nineteen names of David's sons, that is, in the symbolic tenth place. The Chronicler excluded every hint of the story of David and Bathsheba that was not in accordance with his generally positive descriptions of these core Israelite figures. This includes the birth and death of Bathsheba's first son, which violates the Chronicler's understanding of strict reward and punishment. According to the Chronicler, the name Shlomoh was itself given to the child by God prior to his birth – a notion that is also found in some prophetic books and in several ancient Near Eastern texts. Here also Solomon was elected by the Lord himself to be a king over Israel. The Chronicler interprets Solomon's name twice, by explaining its root.

Chapters Eight and Nine then consider the absence from the biblical historiographical texts of any information regarding Solomon's childhood and pre-monarchical time, as well as his visual or physical appearance. These exclusions are more surprising than they might otherwise be, because the early biblical historiography *does* report Solomon's birth and his conflict with his brothers regarding the succession, yet says nothing about the time in between these events. Even more starkly, Samuel-Kings describes the physical appearance of each of Solomon's royal predecessors – Saul and David – and fellow claimants – Absalom and Adonijah – as well as several other members of David's family, yet says nothing about how Solomon looked. These chapters therefore ask why this information would not be supplied by the author/editor, and whether anything can be inferred from the text regarding these issues.

Regarding Solomon's pre-monarchic life, it is likely that the editor(s) who compiled Samuel-Kings were dependent on the Succession Narrative for their information, and since it did not describe Solomon's childhood, there was probably no other source available to do so. This is understandable, and common for the entire biblical period, where only very rarely is anything said concerning the pre-monarchic life of any king. Presumably, Solomon had a typical childhood like others in the royal court, but all that can be said is that he married Naamah the Ammonite as a teenager – which

was not abnormal in biblical times – and his oldest son, Rehoboam (1 Kgs 14:21), was apparently born before he secured the throne. There is no solid evidence for some scholars' conclusion that David committed Solomon to the charge of Nathan the prophet, that the latter was appointed guardian of Solomon, or that he was responsible for Solomon's education.

Regarding the appearance of Solomon, [Chapter Nine](#) notes that while it is possible that he was good-looking like his parents, David and Bathsheba, and like at least as some of his half-brothers and a half-sister (e.g., Absalom, Adonijah, and Tamar), this is never stated in Samuel, Kings, or Chronicles. It is argued that the absence of any description of Solomon's physical appearance could be meant to imply that his credentials to be king did not depend on his physical beauty (in contrast to Eliab, Absalom, and Adonijah). Instead, they depended on his internal qualities as a wise leader and scholar. Solomon's qualifications are highlighted already in the Lord's first revelation to him at Gibeon, when he asked for "an understanding heart to judge your people" (1 Kgs 3:5–14, esp. 3:9 // 2 Chr 1:10, "Give me now wisdom and knowledge to go out and come in before this people"). Solomon's legendary wisdom is stressed and exemplified several times in Kings (1 Kgs 5:9–14, 21, 26 [ET, 4:29–34; 5:7, 12]; 10:1–10), and became his defining characteristic, rather than his physical stature. However, even here, despite his wisdom, he transgressed (1 Kgs 11).

Though the Chronicler tracks Samuel-Kings in giving no information about Solomon's appearance, he takes a different direction regarding Solomon's wisdom, even downplaying it. This was probably in order to highlight the righteousness of the king as the Temple builder, and his obedience and faithfulness to the Lord of Israel, as his father commanded him in his testament.

Seemingly, the poetic descriptions of the Song of Songs – particularly Song 5:10–16 – do not refer to the physical appearance of King Solomon (despite 3:6–11), but in any case such poetic imagery cannot be read as straightforwardly literal nor historiographical, as the texts dedicated to Solomon in Samuel-Kings might be read.

[Chapter Ten](#) investigates the succession of Solomon to David's throne. First, it attempts to reconstruct the historical situation, as much as may be deduced from the only surviving source for these events, the Succession Narrative, then focuses primarily on how the succession is portrayed in Samuel-Kings on the one hand, and in the Chronistic history on the other. The attempt to reconstruct the historical situation is necessary in this case in order to properly understand the differing historiographical methods employed by these writers. The chapter argues that while both accounts

attempt to legitimate Solomon as the divinely chosen king over Israel, they employ unambiguously contrasting means and methods of doing so.

The first two chapters of Kings are very closely related and neither of them can stand by itself. In fact, Solomon's succession was finalized with the fulfillment of what is called David's Testament (1 Kgs 2:1-9) and the removal of his potential rivals (1 Kgs 2:10-46a). Together, the two parts of the Succession Narrative in 1 Kings 1-2 presuppose that Solomon was not the legitimate heir to the throne: Adonijah was the elder and next in the direct royal line, and he was supported by most of David's sons and his top officials as well as other leaders of Judah. First Kings 1-2 describes Solomon's rise to the kingship as a result of power-struggles and intrigues in the palace during the last days of the old, sick, and weak David, who was manipulated by Nathan and Bathsheba. The Succession Narrative, as incorporated into Samuel-Kings, makes no attempt to hide the dubious means by which Solomon attained the throne, but presents this sequence of events as the fulfillment of the Lord's will. This is comparable to other biblical stories in which late-born sons are chosen over their elder brothers, and it most closely parallels the story of Jacob and Esau, in which Jacob attains his father's inheritance through a combination of divine will and human deception. Similarly, the Succession Narrative acknowledges that Solomon gained the throne through political intrigue, but simultaneously affirms that it was "from the Lord." It also uses the three-four literary pattern to structure its entire account, presenting three failed sons of David (Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah), in order to place Solomon in the favored fourth position, while framing this with explicit references to the Lord's love for and choice of Solomon.

In the Chronic history, however, nearly all the elements that cast a negative light on David, Nathan, Bathsheba, and Solomon are omitted, while God's election of Solomon is even more directly and strongly emphasized: He was chosen not only by David, but first and foremost by the Lord, already in his mother's womb (1 Chr 22:7-10). Though the Chronicler leaves out the entire Succession Narrative, including even its references to God's love of Solomon in 2 Samuel 12:25, he builds his own alternative account on its basis, as well as on data found in various other earlier "biblical" texts, such as the prophecy of Nathan in 2 Samuel 7, and the references to God's favor in 1 Kings 3 and 10. The Chronicler also locates Solomon in the fourth place, but in completely different ways (1 Chr 3:5-6; 28:4-5, "additions"). In this manner, the Chronicler creates a clearly different story, stating that Solomon was the rightful ruler and appointed Temple builder from the very beginning. There was no conflict or controversy concerning his succession, and no struggle against his

brother Adonijah. On the contrary, all Solomon's brothers and the officials of the kingdom supported his ascension to the throne.

The two accounts of the rise of Solomon are completely different, as is further seen in [Chapter Eleven](#), which examines Solomon's coronation, the Testament of David, and Solomon's first actions as king. Whereas in 1 Kings 1–2, Solomon's rise to power came through political confrontation and calculated assassinations of potential rivals, in Chronicles Solomon's succession to the throne is entirely peaceful. Both accounts attempt to justify his actions by attributing a Testament to David in which he solemnly charges Solomon to carry out the tasks that he subsequently accomplishes at the beginning of his reign (1 Kgs 2:1–9; 1 Chr 22:5–19 and 28:1–29:5). Neither Testament is likely to go back to the historical David – both reflect secondary attempts to justify Solomon's actions. But the two Testaments differ substantially in content: In 1 Kings 2, the Testament includes both religious instructions (the charge to follow the Lord's commandments) and political advice (to execute Joab and Shimei). In Chronicles, David focuses exclusively on Solomon's religious duties, and adds a lengthy charge to construct the Jerusalem Temple. Thus, while the version of David's Testament in Kings prescribes actions that take vengeance and eliminate challengers to Solomon's authority, the version in Chronicles specifies building projects that reflect the smooth transition from David to Solomon.

The early part of Solomon's reign corresponds to these commands in each account: In 1 Kings 2, Solomon has Joab and Shimei executed, in accordance with David's Testament. The further elimination of Adonijah is justified by the latter's request for Abishag (which Solomon considered inappropriate and illegitimate), and the expulsion of Abiathar is presented as the fulfillment of "the word of the Lord which he had spoken concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh" (1 Kgs 2:27b). Solomon also marries Pharaoh's daughter, which was clearly a politically oriented marriage, in order to strengthen his position from the outside (1 Kgs 3:1). In none of these cases is Solomon explicitly condemned for his actions, but neither do the early biblical historians attempt to hide them. Only after these actions does Solomon visit the high place at Gibeon to sacrifice and obtain a divine revelation (1 Kgs 3:4–15). He first starts to build the Temple four years after his succession to the throne (1 Kgs 6:1, 37).

In the Chronistic history, however, Solomon is unquestionably the legitimate king from the very beginning, and his first acts are to visit "God's Tent of Meeting, which Moses the servant of the Lord had made," being held at Gibeon (2 Chr 1:1–13 esp. his "addition" in verse 3), and then to begin work on the Temple itself (2 Chr 2:1–5:1). This is also meant to show the smooth and ideal transition from David to Solomon, who took over a

kingdom marked not by political rivalry (as in Kings), but by peace and prosperity. David had already collected vast amounts of building material, and Solomon had peace – inside as well as outside of the kingdom – and the religious and political authority (from God and David) necessary to put those materials to immediate use in constructing the Temple. He fulfilled his father's Testament by maintaining the Lord's commandments and by building the Temple as his first priority. While David was stained with blood (regardless of his blame or innocence), Solomon was pure and clean, without any stain or wickedness. Furthermore, in Chronicles Solomon's kingship is more than just political: It symbolizes the union of theocracy and monarchy. He is the representative of God on earth, as well as the king of the people and their representative before God. Thus, according to both historiographies, Solomon completely fulfills the Testament of David, but this is presented in radically different ways by each historian.

Chapter Twelve highlights the account of Solomon's coronation in 1 Kings 1 and one particular literary device employed in that account, which further illustrates the contrasting portrayals in Kings and Chronicles: In the Succession Narrative in 1 Kings 1, the sounds of musical instruments and human voices being heard elsewhere is used as a literary tool to transition the reader from Solomon's coronation to Adonijah's party (1 Kgs 1:40). This literary phenomenon also appears in a number of other narratives in the Hebrew Bible, particularly in the Ark Narrative (in the book of Samuel), at the coronation of Joash as king of Judah (in the books of Kings and Chronicles), and – in somewhat differing forms – in the Joseph Story and in the book of Ezra. Especially in Samuel-Kings, this motif appears to be used not just as a stylistic element, but to mark several major transitions in the history of Israel. Its omission from the story of Solomon's accession in Chronicles could therefore reflect another aspect of the Chronicler's smoothing over the transition from David to Solomon, which we have traced throughout this volume.

As emphasized in **Chapter Thirteen**, in both histories Solomon was the builder of the first Temple in the divinely chosen city – Jerusalem – a mission that could not be fulfilled by his father, David. Although the latter provided materials used for the building of the Temple in both accounts (2 Sam 8:7–11 // 1 Chr 18:8–11), in Chronicles this is very detailed, clear, and bold. In other words, here David's additional preparations for the Temple occupy overwhelming attention and space (roughly 1 Chr 22:2–29:25), implying that David had an essential part in the building of the Temple. While both Samuel-Kings and Chronicles present the founding of the Jerusalem Temple as the climax of Solomon's reign and his most significant accomplishment, the Chronicler goes much further in

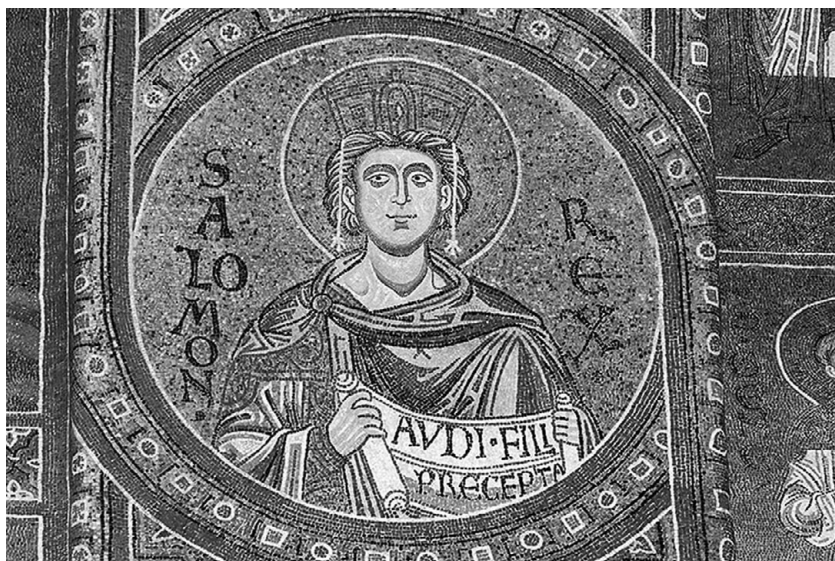


Figure 5 King Solomon, Cathedral of Monreale, Monreale (Sicily, Italy).

presenting this as Solomon's destiny and goal from the very beginning. The Chronicler's community was centered on Zerubbabel's Temple (which was erected on the same location as Solomon's Temple and considered to be its substitute),² and he accordingly grants to the Temple-builder, Solomon, the central role in his account of the monarchic period. For the Chronicler, the Solomonic Temple opens a new avenue for service to God, and a new era in Jewish history and religion. Consequently, he attributed to Solomon himself a unique place among all David's sons and among the "four" sons of Bathsheba/Bathshua (1 Chr 3:5, an "addition"). He was chosen to be the first Temple-builder even before he was born, and he began its construction almost immediately after he took the throne. Unlike in *Kings*, the Chronicler's descriptions also omit any sins by the Temple-builder, and harmonize Solomon's Temple with his own Second Temple on the one side, and with the glorious Tabernacle of Moses on the other, reflecting both his postexilic setting and the authority of the Torah for his generation.

² See Kalimi, *Early Jewish Exegesis and Theological Controversy*, pp. 9–32, esp. pp. 16–31.

II. THE MAN AND THE MYTH: SOLOMON IN HISTORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

Unlike several other Israelite and Judahite kings, there is no mention of Solomon in any surviving ancient inscription or extrabiblical source, and the archaeological materials uncovered at different sites in the Land of Israel that could be related to Solomon are open to interpretation. For instance, the discovery of monumental ancient structures in cities such as Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer – all linked by the biblical texts to Solomon's construction activities – has led to fierce disputes among archaeologists in recent decades, even about essential questions of their time and function. Thus, if one accepts the High Chronology dating of the finds, these could be from Solomon's era; if the choice goes to the Low Chronology, then they are excluded from Solomon's time. Accordingly, it remains debated whether the archaeological material tends to support or undermine the biblical accounts about Solomon's building activities. But regarding the rest of Solomon's activities and period, the biblical texts are, as of now, the only source we have for reconstructing who Solomon was and the major outlines of his life and kingdom.

Except for David, Solomon receives more attention than any other king of Judah and Israel in the biblical literature (as well as in later Jewish, Christian, and Islamic cultures).³ Solomon's unique wisdom and judgment have often been celebrated, and he himself has been lionized as one of the greatest kings and scholars of ancient Israel. Yet despite this glorious reputation and collective recognition, we have seen that Solomon's portrayals in the Hebrew Bible are complex and at times even contradictory: The texts in the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles regarding his birth, rise, reign, and Temple building are multifaceted. Some of the information they provide has been shaped and reshaped by the ideological and theological views of their authors and editors, and they include some nonhistorical material, late additions and glosses, occasional anachronisms, internal contradictions, inaccurate statements, and even legendary accretions.

Obviously, this problematic data concerning Solomon dictates the content, features, and limits of any historical description of this king

³ This situation could be a natural result of the sources that the biblical author/editor had in hand, or could reflect his own preference and the level of importance that he attributed to each of the kings, or both reasons together.

and his time. It goes without saying that they create significant difficulties for a modern historian, but these are not insurmountable. Although the sufficiency and interpretation of the biblical and archaeological materials related to Solomon and his reign are controversial in contemporary scholarship, there is no *a priori* reason to deny his (as well as Saul's and David's) existence and chief activities, as attested in the books of Samuel and Kings, nor to reject the overall credibility of the early biblical records as a whole.

The foregoing systematic investigation and comparison of the biblical narratives situates them within their own biblical settings, and – as much as the sources allow – in light of the likely historical situation that underlies them, as well as in relation to their native and neighboring ancient Near Eastern cultural, literary, and religious contexts. It reveals a correlation between the biblical Solomon's birth story, names, and divine legitimization and those found in other royal succession accounts from surrounding ancient cultures. The volume demonstrates the unity – to a large extent – of the biblical texts and their content, form, literary techniques, and ideological and theological concepts. This undermines scholarly attempts to tear the texts into countless tiny fragments, purportedly written by many editors over an unreasonably long span of centuries. It shows how the core of the accounts of Solomon in the early biblical historiography (that is, in Samuel-Kings) are at home in the monarchic period and its ancient Near Eastern contexts, rather than in later periods in the history of Israel, as some scholars have argued. Moreover, this volume also demonstrates how in the Second Temple period the Chronicler rewrote some early Israelite historical writings according to his own contemporary historical circumstances, theological conceptions, literary methods, and linguistic conventions.

It has been shown that the portraits of Solomon in these two biblical writings are characterized by major differences. Samuel-Kings and Chronicles exhibit contrasting literary styles, traditional backgrounds, historical reliability, and theological goals and implications. Though they share many themes and describe several of the same aspects of Solomon's life, they differ regarding many important details. As we have seen, both present Solomon as the divinely elected successor to David, but they do so using radically different literary means. According to both, the king received his name from the Lord, but they differ regarding when this happened and which name was given. Both historians present Solomon in the fourth position among David's sons, but in entirely different contexts.

Whereas according to Kings, in his last days David was old, sick, and bedridden, leaving an uncertain political situation, according to Chronicles David was indeed old, but very energetic, and actively involved in preparing the way for his chosen successor, Solomon. Thus, Kings presents the succession of Solomon to the throne via court intrigues and bloody struggle, while Chronicles presents a peaceful and harmonious succession. Both attribute to David a "Testament" that Solomon implemented; however, while in Kings this includes not only religious commands, but also political instructions, in Chronicles the latter are omitted and the former expanded. In both, Solomon's construction of the Temple is the high point of his reign, but in Kings he first turns to the matter only four years after taking the throne, whereas in Chronicles David had already provided all that was necessary for construction, and Solomon engaged himself in this project immediately after taking the throne and seeking the Lord at Gibeon. Finally, in Chronicles, Solomon's Temple is characterized by various elements that also appear in the accounts of Moses' Tabernacle and the (Second) Temple of the Chronicler's own time. These features are absent from the description of Solomon's Temple in Kings.

Yet for all these variations regarding religious and political events, the fundamental difference between these two portraits of Solomon is to be found in the goal that each historian had set for himself in depicting Solomon. The early Israelite historiography depicts "the man," a plausible human portrait of King Solomon, and the main outlines of his reign, which is *essentially* close to reality. Whereas the late Israelite historiography – in Chronicles – reflects "the myth," a utopic King Solomon, who is very far from reality and in fact never existed as such. That does not mean that Chronicles as a whole includes no historical information, nor that Samuel-Kings includes no legendary elements, but instead reflects the basic difference in approach between these two works.

In general, the editors of Samuel-Kings did not make a concerted effort to rewrite their sources in conformity to their views of how Solomon *should* have behaved. Though they include some apologetic and legendary material (such as the naming of Solomon Yedidyah at his birth, and the accounts of his fabulous wisdom, wealth, and harem), they also maintained the more problematic elements from their sources, even when these contradicted their own views, offering us a more direct view of the man himself. By contrast, Chronicles is much freer to smooth out its sources in order to produce a consistent, positive depiction. These accounts are therefore irreconcilable. Each of them is the product of the

time, place, and circumstances in which it was written.⁴ Each historian presents the portrait of Solomon applicable to his own generation: The early historian of the First Temple period basically followed some sources that were available to him (and probably also known to his audience), with only minor additions and clarifications (usually placed at the edge of the sources, often in the form of notes and ascribed speeches). The Chronicler of the Second Temple period intensively reshaped the texts from Samuel-Kings according to the religious and social conditions of his time (ca. 400–375 BCE) and place (Jerusalem), including a commitment to the authority of the complete Torah, which was already established.

In particular, Samuel-Kings describes the scandalous circumstances that led to the birth of the second son of Bathsheba (who received the name Shlomoh from one of his parents), the court intrigues that led to his succession to the throne, and the bloody elimination of potential rivals that consolidated his reign. As in comparable texts elsewhere in the ancient Near East, all these were legitimized by the statement that the Lord loved Solomon from the very beginning of his life, and sent his messenger, Nathan, to name him Yedidyah as well as by assertions that the author/editor ascribed to Adonijah and Solomon himself (1 Kgs 2:15, 24; cf. 3:7; 10:9, and see also 1:48). In addition, the Succession Narrative places Solomon in the fourth and favored place among David's sons, making his ascension the climax and resolution of a protracted conflict over the succession. Moreover, Solomon's subsequent actions upon attaining the throne are described as responses to the inappropriate request of his rival (Adonijah), the fulfillment of God's words (Abiathar) and of David's Testament (Joab and Shimei).

The rest of the account of Solomon's reign in Kings also presents him realistically as a judge, statesman, builder, trader, and sinner. Here Solomon and his kingdom have a climax, but also failures and a downfall. The Lord granted Solomon wisdom and wealth, but these did not remain for him at the end of his life. He made many political marriages to foreign women, which led him to apostasy (1 Kgs 11). Accordingly, Solomon's portrait in Kings presents both the pious and revered builder of the holy Temple in Jerusalem, and the wise but ultimately imperfect king, a human being like any other (cf., e.g., Qoh 7:20; Ps 19:13 [ET, 19:12]). As such, Solomon contributed to the division of the kingdom, the fall of the House

⁴ See in detail, Kalimi, "Placing the Chronicler in His Own Historical Context," pp. 189–192.

of David, and eventually the destruction of Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah, and the expulsion of the Israelites from their land. Thus, Nehemiah, who follows Kings (Chronicles was not composed yet),⁵ mentions King Solomon as a negative example from whom one must learn how not to behave (Neh 13:26).

By contrast, according to Chronicles, Solomon was born in normal circumstances, as the fourth son of Bathsheba, and the tenth of the nineteen sons of David. He received his only name – Shlomoh – from the Lord while in his mother's womb, and he was chosen to succeed David even before being born. Later he was selected from among all his brothers by God himself and by David, peacefully and consensually, to succeed to his father's throne. Solomon was supported by all his brothers, by David's officials, and by all Israel, without any competition whatsoever. Instead, they all agreed that Solomon should be the king over Israel. Thus, Solomon did not need to eliminate any internal (or external) enemies. He immediately established his rule. He completely kept his father's Testament to build the Temple and follow the Torah's commandments. He was granted wisdom and wealth by God and these remained all his life. He neither acted inappropriately inside or out of his kingdom, nor committed any crime or sin. Therefore, he did not cause the fall of his empire, nor the division of the united kingdom of Israel; rather the foolish acts of his successor, Rehoboam, were to blame (2 Chr 10 // 1 Kgs 12). He also did not contribute whatsoever to the later fall of the kingdom of Judah, not only because he never made any mistake, but also because there is no place for an accumulation of intergenerational transgression in the Chronicler's theology. As a result, the Chronicler creates a new Solomon, a perfect person that he wished to have, in place of the one who actually existed. The portrait of Solomon in the book of Chronicles is much more idealistic than that of any other king in ancient Israel, including King David.

Writing in the first quarter of the fourth century BCE in poor Jerusalem, when the province of Yehud was under Persian control, the Chronicler looked back longingly to the builder of the first holy, wealthy, and great Temple, and to the founders of the united Israelite kingdom, David and Solomon, and idealized them as worthy for every Jew to emulate and follow (e.g., cf. 2 Chr 11:17b). In Chronicles, Solomon became a sign and symbol of glory, piety, prosperity, and happiness that

⁵ On this issue see Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 8–9, 320–321; idem, *An Ancient Israelite Historian*, pp. 90–92.

would be imitated and remembered through many generations: “And there was great joy in Jerusalem; for *since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel* there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem” (2 Chr 30:26, an “addition”).

This confirms, once again, my conclusion elsewhere that all writing of history is inescapably shaped by the specific requirements of the time, place, and circumstances in which it is written.⁶ The early and late biblical historiographical writings, like all historical narratives, present particular images of Solomon reshaped according their own timely needs, ideologies, and theologies. That is, neither is simply an objective account of what actually happened, because all history-writing depends on selection, evaluation, interpretation, and synthesis: Of the countless events that occurred in Solomon’s life, each historian must choose which to describe, what aspects of them to emphasize, and how to comprehend them. These choices are inherently subjective and fundamentally shape the image of Solomon that can be gained from the account. On their own, the choices do not imply much about the truth or falsehood of the stories collected and recounted in this way, nor about the authenticity of the overall portrait of Solomon that emerges from them (those are separate questions); it is simply a necessary part of any attempt to distill the past into a manageable account for the needs of the historian’s contemporaries.

However, just because Samuel-Kings and Chronicles each present distinct but more or less comparable visions of Solomon, that does not mean that they both maintain the same approach toward the historical “facts” or their sources. On the contrary, the authors/editors of Samuel-Kings appear to have maintained a very different stance toward these matters than did the Chronicler. In particular, while Samuel-Kings is certainly not free of interpretation, and even includes some late anachronisms, legends, and tendentious additions, by and large it attempts to present a more or less authentic portrait of David and Solomon, close to what they actually were, including their noble and evil acts – like those of all human beings.

In general, the authors/editors of Samuel-Kings have not smoothed over the tensions and contradictions between their sources, nor made any consistent effort to whitewash their accounts. For instance, no attempt is made to hide David’s affair with Bathsheba, his murder of

⁶ See in detail, Kalimi, “Placing the Chronicler in His Own Historical Context,” pp. 189–192.

Uriah, or the various rebellions that marked the end of his reign. Neither does Samuel-Kings omit David's illness before his death, nor the court intrigues and violence that allowed Solomon to take the throne in place of Adonijah. Instead, the author/editor of the Succession Narrative uses relatively minor – however, very important – additions to suggest that *despite* and *through* these things, Solomon gained the throne because of the Lord's love and choice. The latter may well represent a secondary *post-eventum* justification for Solomon's usurpation, but it is presented *in addition to* the acknowledgement of David's and Solomon's most questionable actions, rather than in place of them. Solomon, like David, Jacob, and many other heroes of Israel's legacy and history, is not presented as a perfect person, but as one loved and favored by God to lead his people despite the dubious circumstances of his birth and rise to power. In this way, the Succession Narrative affirms Solomon's divine election, much as the royal apologies of many other usurpers across the ancient Near East do, but without omitting the questionable deeds that led others to doubt his legitimacy in the first place – which is unique among them.

Chronicles, on the other hand, carries this selective nature of all historiography to the extreme, not only emphasizing even more strongly that Solomon was chosen and named by God from birth, and even before, but also omitting every hint of wrongdoing from the stories of David and Solomon. The Chronicler radically alters the story of Solomon's rise in ways that directly contradict its sources in Samuel-Kings (and regularly smooths out the contradictions and difficulties found in them, or that exist between them and the Torah). Thus, the whole account of David's affair with Bathsheba, his murder of Uriah (and Solomon's birth amidst such incidents), David's illness, and the conflict between Adonijah and Solomon (among many other similar cases) are not only omitted, but *replaced* with entirely different and positive stories. By asserting that Solomon was the expected successor from the very beginning, chosen by God and his father, and embraced by *all* his brothers, all the royal officials, and all Israel, the Chronicler goes well beyond the mere selective presentation and elaboration of history. He creates an ideal ("myth") of Solomon that stands in direct contrast to the actual but imperfect man that Samuel-Kings seeks to describe.

Similarly, while each of the biblical texts under discussion presents a portrait of King Solomon applicable to their own generations, this too is accomplished through differing ways and methods, and for differing reasons: The early historians, who seem to have been writing relatively

closer to the time of the events described, and before the complete establishment of the Torah, basically followed some reliable sources that were available to them (which describe him as the second child of David and Bathsheba, after they were married), in an effort to exonerate Solomon from the accusation that his kingship was illegitimate, as seems to have still been current at that time. These texts therefore present a sustained apology for his divine election, and even ascribe a “testament” and speeches to their sources, but usually do not harmonize their sources with any code of laws and commandments.

By contrast, the Chronicler wrote in the Second Temple period, at a time when commitment to the authority of the Torah had become imperative, and the controversies at the beginning of Solomon’s reign were no more than a distant memory. His goal, therefore, was not only to justify Solomon’s actions, but also to elevate him as a perfect Temple builder, who faithfully obeyed God’s commands in the Torah; he was a legitimate king and an uncommonly moral person, a model king and man for subsequent generations (unlike in Neh 13:26). In this way the Chronicler intensively reshaped his sources – the texts borrowed from Samuel-Kings – according to the religious and social conditions of his time and place, in a manner that simply is not in evidence in the work of the early biblical historians.

Therefore, while some scholars presume that since the Chronicler has freely rewritten his sources, one can deduce (even without direct evidence) that the authors/editors of Samuel-Kings have done the same or similar to present their own “myth” of Solomon and his life, this cannot be assumed automatically. Comparison of Chronicles with its sources in Samuel-Kings offers a window into the historiographical methods that could be employed by ancient authors/editors generally, including those of Samuel-Kings.⁷ But it cannot be assumed that all biblical historiographers used the same methods, or to the same extent. To do so ignores the starkly different literary, historiographical, theological, and didactic approaches reflected in these writings, and imposes a uniformity of method and perspective on the biblical historiographers that cannot stand up to scrutiny. That being the case, there is no justification for the all-too-common claims that Samuel-Kings represents an attempt to hide the most embarrassing aspects of Solomon’s history (for instance, the baseless suggestion that Solomon was actually Bathsheba’s firstborn, and

⁷ See Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 409–410.

therefore a bastard).⁸ Neither are there any grounds for the presupposition of some scholars that 2 Samuel 10–12 or 1 Kings 1–2 developed in numerous stages over several centuries (notwithstanding some brief late additions), nor for the claims of the so-called minimalists that the entire account of the United Monarchy is a literary fiction. This is not to deny that the books of Samuel-Kings as a whole reached their final forms long after Solomon's time (extending until the exile), but rather to affirm that its editors drew on much earlier sources, which they generally combined more or less intact, instead of rewriting or harmonizing them. Frequently, the editors of Samuel-Kings even include sources that contradict the fundamental theological commitments of the Deuteronomistic approach.⁹ In sharp contrast to the Chronicler, the authors/editors of Samuel-Kings not only show no tendency to omit the more problematic elements from their sources, but sometimes directly condemn the misdeeds of those whom the Lord favors – such as David and Solomon (e.g., 2 Sam 12:1–12; 1 Kgs 11:1–10).

All of this not only gives good grounds for maintaining the basic trustworthiness of the early biblical historiography, but also reflects the basic differences in approach between the early and late biblical historiographers: Both present Solomon as the divinely chosen successor to David and builder of the Temple, but how they do this differs radically in literary and editorial methods, and theological implications, as well as the language and style that they use. While the author(s)/editor(s) of Samuel-Kings seek to *justify* (1 Kgs 2) or to criticize (1 Kgs 11) those aspects of Solomon that could seem problematic, the Chronicler *omits* whatever does not fit his perspective, and replaces it with the idealistic features that he wishes to present. Thus, while the early biblical historians mostly point to “the man,” their later counterpart favors the “myth,” the fantasy over reality.

⁸ For further examples of content harmonization in Chronicles, where embarrassing details regarding David and Solomon (and others, such as Elijah) were retained in Samuel-Kings, see the discussion in Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 140–165.

⁹ Compare, for example, 2 Sam 5:21 with Deut 7:25; 2 Sam 12:13–23 with Deut 24:16; 2 Kgs 14:6; and 1 Kgs 18:30–32; 19:10, 14 with Deut 12:4–14; see [Chapter Two](#), §III, 1, p. 43.

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Authors Index

- Aharoni, Y., 25, 28, 89
 Ahituv, S., 138, 175
 Ahlström, G. W., 212
 Albright, W. F., 153, 159, 254
 Alexander, J. B., 5
 Alt, A., 80, 206, 224
 Alter, R., 133–4, 193, 268
 Amiran, R., 25
 Anderson, J. E., 228
 Arend, W., 268
 Arie, E., 30
 Aster, S. Z., 290
 Auerbach, E., 103, 192
 Auld, A. G., 9, 42, 49, 60–1, 104, 166, 280
 Aviram, J., 27
 Avraham, N., 132

 Bach, A., 213
 Baden, J., 7
 Baker, D. W., 50
 Baker, H., 143
 Barclay, J. M., 24
 Bar-Efrat, S., 193
 Barkay, G., 25
 Barnes, W. E., 170, 241
 Bartel, A., 241
 Barton, G. A., 181
 Baumgartner, W., 71, 99
 Bayer, B., 5
 Bearman, G., 20
 Becker, U., 9

 Becking, B., 281
 Beckman, G., 153
 Beentjes, P. C., 179–80, 195
 Ben-Ami, D., 27
 Ben-Noun, L., 203
 Ben-Tor, A., 25, 27, 51
 Ben-Yosef, E., 31
 Benzinger, I., 170, 207–8, 216, 248, 250, 284
 Berenbaum, M., 4
 Bezzel, H., 9
 Biberger, B., 212
 Biran, A., 23, 133
 Blankenberg-van Delden, C., 90
 Blum, E., 83
 Boardman, J., 89, 149
 Boaretto, E., 30
 Böck, B., 150
 Bodner, K., 262
 Bonnefoy, Y., 154
 Borger, R., 140
 Botterweck, G. J., 116
 Braudel, F., 84
 Braun, R. L., 170
 Breasted, J. H., 155–7
 Brettler, M. Z., 127
 Brice, L. L., 101
 Bright, J., 68, 215
 Brisch, N., 129
 Brown, R. E., 182
 Brueggemann, W., 7
 Brunner, H., 155

- Buber, M. M., 127
 Budde, K., 102-3, 187, 218
 Burnside, J., 253

 Cahill, J. M., 29, 78
 Campbell, A. F., 262
 Cancik-Kirschbaum, E., 150
 Carr, D. M., 280
 Caspari, W., 126, 187
 Cassuto, U., 226, 238
 Caubet, A., 150
 Chesnutt, R. D., 175
 Childs, B. S., 145
 Christen-Barry, W. A., 20
 Clark, M., 268
 Cline, E. H., 30
 Cogan, M., 33, 35-6, 70, 81, 83, 90,
 139, 160, 204, 208, 223,
 244, 248
 Cohen, C., 128, 146, 150
 Cohen, Y., 153
 Collins, B. J., 154
 Coogan, M. D., 33, 37, 175, 198
 Cook, S. A., 103, 107
 Cooke, G., 140, 233
 Cooper, J. S., 147-8
 Corley, J., 179
 Crenshaw, J. L., 182
 Cross, F. M., 33, 57
 Culley, R. C., 127
 Curtis, E. L., 166, 170, 242

 Davies, P. R., 22, 42, 47-8, 50-5, 57-8, 64,
 68, 79, 84
 Day, J., 73
 Delekat, L., 102
 Delitzsch, F., 198
 Demsky, A., 226
 Dessoudeix, M., 157
 Dever, W. G., 27, 64
 DeVries, S. J., 81, 204, 218, 247
 Dhorme, E. P., 102
 Di Lella, A. A., 180
 Dietrich, W., 68, 102-3, 106, 120, 127,
 212, 225-6
 Dillard, R. B., 8, 168
 Dirksen, P. B., 242, 253, 255, 287
 Dodson, A., 90
 Donadoni, S., 155
 Donner, H., 99, 143
 Dörrfuss, E. M., 255

 Drews, R., 146-7
 Driver, S. R., 34, 187
 Dus, J., 127

 Ebeling, E., 144
 Edgerton, W. F., 155
 Edwards, L. E. S., 155
 Edzard, D. O., 144
 Ehrensverd, M., 59
 Ehrlich, A. B., 117, 214-16
 Eissfeldt, O., 247
 Emerton, J. A., 102
 Eph'al, I., 150
 Eshel, E., 57
 Exum, J. C., 116, 190-1, 198-9
 Eynikel, E., 104

 Fabry, H.-J., 116
 Fantalkin, A., 75
 Fassberg, S. E., 59-60
 Fenik, B., 268
 Fewell, D. N., 269
 Fine, S., 71
 Finkelstein, I., 6, 23, 25-6, 28-30, 42,
 48-9, 56, 67-9, 75, 77-9, 81, 83-6
 Fischer, A. A., 101, 104
 Foster, B. R., 145, 147, 149
 Fowler, R., 268
 Fox, M. V., 138
 Franke, S., 150
 Frankfort, H., 135, 261
 Freedman, D. N., 33, 182, 249
 Fremantle, K., 5
 Frerichs, E. S., 276
 Frevel, C., 23, 68, 73, 75
 Friedman, R. E., 67
 Frisch, A., 51
 Fuchs, A., 143, 149-50

 Galil, G., 68, 73-4, 272
 Galling, K., 242
 Ganor, S., 20, 30
 Garbini, G., 22, 36, 42-8
 Gardner, A. E., 69, 166
 Garfinkel, Y., 6, 20, 30, 75
 Garrett, D., 198
 Gehman, H. S., 43, 88, 90, 203-4, 212-13,
 246, 248-9
 Gerhards, M., 146
 Gerleman, G., 110, 197-8
 Gesenius, W., 99

- Gibson, J. C. L., 60
 Gibson, M., 146
 Gilboa, A., 30
 Gilmour, R., 127
 Glassner, J. J., 150
 Glicksman, A. T., 175
 Glueck, N., 31
 Godley, A. D., 158
 Goedicke, H., 154
 von Goethe, J. W., 292
 Goetze, A., 160
 Goldin, J., 182
 Goldmark, C., 5
 Golka, F. W., 266
 Golub, M. R., 98
 Gordis, R., 182
 Grabbe, L. L., 50, 53, 62, 68
 Gray, J., 81, 83, 204, 210, 213, 246,
 248-50
 Grayson, A. K., 89, 144, 149
 Greenberg, Y., 98
 Greenspahn, F. E., 172, 229
 Greenstein, E. L., 71
 Greßmann, H., 105, 161, 204, 247-8
 Griffiths, J. G., 161
 van Grol, H., 179
 Guillaume, P., 49, 68, 70, 81, 85, 104
 Güterbock, H. G., 90, 146, 152-3
 Gutman, J., 262

 Hackett, A., 57
 Hagelia, H., 23
 Hallo, W. W., 142, 145, 152, 159
 Halpern, B., 79-80, 111-12, 126, 249
 Handy, L. K., 5, 27, 49, 81, 104
 Haran, M., 78
 Hayes, W. C., 155
 Healy, M., 101
 Hegel, G. W. F., 57
 Heinz, M., 144, 146, 150
 Hentschel, G., 69
 Herr, L. G., 25
 Hertzberg, H. W., 103, 136, 187, 218
 Herzog, Z., 25, 29, 80
 Heyse, P., 5
 Higham, T., 25-6
 Hoffman, Y., 139
 Hoffner, H. A., 153-4
 Honeyman, M., 134
 Hornung, E., 155-6
 Horowitz, W., 98

 van der Horst, P. W., 160
 Hossfeld, F. L., 178
 van den Hout, T. P. J., 151-2
 Houtman, C., 161
 Hurowitz, V. A., 73-4, 150, 272, 274
 Hurvitz, A., 57, 60, 244

 Ishida, T., 35, 113, 129-31, 138-9, 146,
 202, 207-8, 210-12, 219, 225, 251

 Jackson, K. P., 139
 Jacoby, F., 146
 James, P., 6, 21, 45, 70
 Jamieson-Drake, D. W., 226
 Japhet, S., 8, 170, 257
 Jarick, J., 8
 Jeremias, J., 274
 Jones, B. W., 159
 Jones, L., 147

 Kalimi, I., xviii, 4, 7, 9, 13, 32, 35-9, 50-2,
 54, 58, 60-1, 72, 75, 83, 106, 117,
 139-40, 151, 159, 166-9, 172-3,
 175-6, 178, 182, 189, 195, 207, 221,
 232-5, 240-2, 244, 252, 265-6,
 275-6, 278, 280, 283-5, 287-9, 292,
 294, 306, 310-12, 314-15
 Kaufman, Y., 180, 215, 219
 Keel, O., 197
 Kenyon, K. M., 28
 Kessler, R., 128
 van Keulen, S. F., 6, 219
 Killebrew, A. E., 29, 67, 69, 76
 Kirkpatrick, A. F., 187-8
 Kitchen, K. A., 22, 35, 45, 51, 69
 Kittel, R., 170-1, 207, 242
 Klein, R. W., 8, 171, 174, 242, 281, 287
 Klostermann, A., 120, 131, 204-5, 208,
 210, 244
 Knapp, A., 7, 113, 129-30, 139, 141, 143,
 152, 154, 162-3, 219-20, 248
 Knauf, E. A., 23, 42, 49, 59-60, 68, 70-1,
 78, 81, 85, 104, 126
 Knoppers, G. N., 41, 69, 74, 89, 172, 281
 Kochavi, M., 55
 Koehler, L., 71, 99
 van der Kooij, A., 151, 160
 Kramer, S. N., 147
 Kratz, R. G., 29, 154
 Kreimerman, I., 20
 Kropat, A., 60

- Kuenen, A., 34
 Kunz-Lübcke, A., 7

 Laroche, E., 152, 154
 Lassner, J., 51
 Lehmann, G., 76, 84–5
 Leichty, E., 139
 Lemaire, A., 20, 23, 50, 57
 Lemche, N. P., 42, 50, 62, 68–9, 77
 Levin, I. L., 51
 Levin, Y., 160
 Levine, B. A., 69, 276, 281
 Levy, S., 160
 Levy, T. E., 25–6
 Lewis, B., 145, 147–9
 Lewison-Gilboa, A., 27
 Lewy, H., 207
 Lichtheim, M., 157
 Lipiński, E., 23
 Liver, J., 35–6, 43, 89
 Longman, T., III, 143, 145, 197
 Luckenbill, D. D., 140
 Lundberg, M. J., 71
 Luther, B., 100
 Lux, R., 6, 69
 Lynch, M., 243, 273

 Maass, F., 102
 Madsen, A. A., 166, 170, 242
 Malamat, A., 35, 69, 88–9, 100, 174, 241, 256
 Marcus, R., 238, 240
 Marsman, H. J., 217
 Martin, M. A. S., 30
 Mattingly, G. L., 159
 Mauchline, J., 187
 Mauthner, F., 57
 Mazar, A., 25–6, 29, 51
 Mazar, B., 22, 28, 68, 174, 241
 Mazar, E., 28–9
 McCarter, P. K., Jr., 57, 72, 100, 111, 114, 117, 123, 126, 128, 130, 134
 McCarthy, D. J., 274
 McKenzie, S. L., 8, 33, 99, 111, 128, 172, 219–20, 289
 Meinhold, J., 170
 Meinhold, W., 147
 Meissner, B., 144
 Mettinger, T. N. D., 81, 187, 216
 Meyer, E., 100
 Meyers, E. M., 27–8

 van de Mieroop, M., 149–50, 153, 159
 Mildenerberger, F., 247
 Millard, A. R., 20, 74, 89
 Miller, A., 198
 Misgav, H., 20
 Momigliano, A., 143
 Montgomery, J. A., 43, 88, 90, 203–4, 212–13, 246, 248–9
 Moore, G. F., 180
 Moorey, P. R. S., 146
 Moran, W. L., 114, 137
 Mosis, R., 171, 255, 284
 Mulder, M. J., 36, 81, 83, 203, 223, 244, 248
 Mumcuoglu, M., 6, 75
 Murphy, R. E., 181, 190, 198
 Myers, J. M., 245

 Na'aman, N., 22, 45, 54, 56, 79, 81–2, 100, 150, 226
 Naveh, J., 23, 133
 Nelson, R. D., 34
 Neusner, J., 276
 Newsom, C., 116
 Nicol, G. G., 99, 213
 Niemann, H. M., 49, 81–2, 226
 Niens, C., 268
 Nitsche, S. A., 104–5, 107
 North, C. R., 243
 Noth, M., 20, 33, 35, 68, 204, 206, 215, 254
 Nowack, W., 102

 Oded, B., 51, 57, 64
 Oettli, S., 170, 198
 Ofer, A., 56, 84
 Olyan, S. M., 127
 Oppenheim, A. L., 139, 144, 147
 Ortiz, S., 27
 Oswald, W., 6, 211, 274

 Pákozdy, L. M., von, 134
 Parker, S. B., 238
 Parpola, S., 82, 150, 160, 207
 Pasto, J., 50
 Paul, S. M., 140, 229
 Peckham, B., 34
 Person, R. F., 9
 Pettinato, G., 147
 Phillips, G. A., 269
 Piasetzky, E., 28

- Pietsch, M., 6, 274
 Pike, D. M., 139–40
 Pitard, W. T., 71
 Polzin, R., 60
 Pope, M. H., 190
 Poulssen, N., 243
 Pritchard, J. B., 90, 139, 143, 208, 286
 Provan, I., 50
 de Pury, A., 219
- von Rad, G., 250
 Rainey, A. F., 50, 64
 Reimer, P. J., 30
 Rezetko, R., 59
 Richardson, S. F. C., 52, 101
 Richter, T., 150
 Ringgren, H., 116
 Roberts, J. J. M., 67, 87, 154
 Roberts, J. T., 101
 Robinson, J., 215
 Robker, J. M., 24
 Rofé, A., 83, 218–19, 276
 Rogerson, J. W., 57, 64
 Röllig, W., 99, 143
 Rollston, C., 20–1
 Römer, T., 219
 Rosenthal, F., 208
 Rost, L., 100, 103, 215
 Rowley, H. H., 197–8
 Rudnig, T. A., 6, 34, 104, 108, 219, 224
 Rudolph, W., 168, 171, 174, 254, 284
 Rupprecht, K., 70
- Sæbø, M., 50
 Sakenfeld, K. D., 33, 151
 Sallaberger, W., 144
 Sandhaus, D., 27
 Särkiö, P., 6–7, 256
 Sarna, N. M., 35, 81, 282
 Sasson, G., 7
 Sasson, J. M., 151
 Sasson, V., 198
 Schäfer, H., 154
 Schäfer-Lichtenberger, Ch., 111
 Schick, A., 7
 Schmidt, B. B., 20, 25
 Schmitt, R., 129, 158
 Schott, S., 155
 Schwally, F., 102–3
 Schwemer, D., 154
- Schwiehorst-Schönberger, L., 182
 Segal, M. Z., 131, 180, 195, 218
 Sethe, K., 155
 Seux, M.-J., 142
 Shakespeare, W., 52–3
 Sharon, I., 30
 Silberman, N. A., 6, 23, 25, 48–9, 55–6, 68–9, 77–8, 81, 83–6
 Simian-Yofre, H., 116
 Singer, I., 147, 152–4
 Singer-Avitz, L., 29
 Skehan, P. W., 180
 Skinner, A. C., 139
 Skolnik, F., 4
 Smend, R., 103
 Smith, H. P., 102, 106, 218
 Smith, S., 149
 von Soden, W., 144
 Soggin, J. A., 128
 Sommerfeld, W., 144
 Speiser, E. A., 145, 147, 160
 Sperber, A., 216
 Spieckermann, H., 29, 154
 Spinoza, B., 36
 Stamm, J. J., 98, 110
 Steed, H. W., 206
 Stefan, M., 5
 Stern, E., 27
 Stern, M., 5, 20
 Stoebe, H.-J., 106, 108, 188, 218
 Stolz, F., 110, 127, 131
 Strack, H., 120
 Streck, M., 140
 Streit, K., 30
- Tadmor, H., 139, 142–3, 160, 250
 Talshir, Z., 51, 57, 64
 Talstra, E., 36
 Thackeray, H. St. J., 24, 238, 240
 Thenius, O., 186
 Thompson, T. L., 42, 45, 47, 50–6, 61–2, 64, 69, 77–8, 84
 Toffolo, M. B., 30
 van der Toorn, K., 160
 Torijano, P. A., 7, 179
 Tov, E., 219
 Troen, S. I., 51
 Tuell, S. S., 174
- Ünal, A., 151
 Ussishkin, D., 28–30, 69, 76

- Van Seters, J., 101, 134
 Vaughn, A. G., 29, 67, 69, 76
 de Vaux, R., 89, 126, 134-5, 207, 216, 261
 van der Veen, P. G., 6, 21, 45, 70
 Veijola, T., 34, 102-3, 107-9, 112-13, 205, 221-4, 244, 247-8, 250, 274
 Verheyden, J., xviii, 7, 273
 Volck, W., 198
 de Vries, P., 290, 292

 Watanabe, K., 160
 Weidner, E., 207
 Weinfeld, M., 106, 138-9, 251, 274
 Weippert, M., 24, 141
 Weitzman, S., 7
 Wellhausen, J., 34, 106, 168, 187, 218, 225, 272
 Westenholz, A., 144
 Westenholz, J. G., 144-5, 148, 159
 Westermann, C., 266
 White, M., 127
 Whitelam, K. M., 20
 Whybray, R. N., 219
 Wightman, G. J., 28
 Wilda, G., 243
 Willi, T., 170, 172-3

 Williamson, H. G. M., 8, 116, 170, 241, 278, 282-3, 286-7
 Willmes, B., 181
 Wilson, J. A., 90, 286
 Winston, D., 175
 Wolff, S., 27
 Wolkstein, D., 147
 Wright, B. G., III, 179
 Wright, E., 25
 Wright, J. L., 7
 Würthwein, E., 81, 103, 202, 204, 206, 216, 247-8
 Wyatt, N., 131-3

 Yadin, Y., 21, 26-8
 Yardeni, A., 20, 57
 Yeivin, S., 175
 Young, I., 59-60
 Young, T. C., 151
 Younger, K. L., Jr., 50, 145, 152

 Zakovitch, Y., 190-1, 198, 221
 Zalewski, S., 139, 204, 209, 215, 241, 245
 Zenger, E., 178
 Zer-Kabod, M., 181
 Zilberg, P., 20, 98
 Zöckler, O., 120, 198
 Zwickel, W., 7, 24, 70, 73-4, 272

Name and Subject Index

- Aaron, 229
 abandoned child motif, 146
 Abel, 110, 229
 Abiathar, 209–10, 214, 237, 253, 310
 execution, 219, 244
 expulsion from Jerusalem, 250
 replaced by Zadok, 217
 supported Adonijah, 250
 Yahwist, 212
 Abigail, 192–3
 Abishag the Shunammite, 137, 192–3, 197,
 203–4, 207, 212
 Abner, son of Ner, 133, 210, 245–6, 249
 Abraham, 125, 267, 269
 Absalom, 106, 136, 159, 186, 189, 207,
 209, 245
 announced as king, 209
 character, 196
 death, 194, 207, 221
 legitimacy, 196
 murdered Amnon, 194, 220, 245, 249
 omitted by Chronicler, 234
 physical appearance, 192–6, 199
 rebellion, 194, 208, 214, 220, 228, 245–6,
 249
 relation with David, 209
 slept with David's concubines, 210
 sought kingship, 186
 usurper, 210
 Achaemenid Empire, 151
 Achilles, 53
Across-the-River (province), 82–3
 Adad-nirari III, 233
 Adam, 125
 additions, 307
 Adonijah, 126, 136–7, 140, 148, 152, 159,
 163, 186, 189, 212–13, 270, 310, 313
 ambition, 223
 announcement as king, 186, 209
 challenged Solomon, 210
 contrast with Absalom, 208–10
 crown-prince, 207, 211, 221, 223
 did not rebel, 209–11, 213, 217, 228
 downfall, 260
 execution, 219, 244, 247, 253
 expected successor, 207, 228–9, 235
 fourth son of David, 220
 judgment, 186
 legitimacy, 209
 omitted by Chronicler, 234
 party, 260
 physical appearance, 193–6, 199
 rebellion, 208
 rejected despite legitimacy, 228
 requested Abishag as a wife, 204, 207,
 210, 213, 249
 similar to Absalom, 208, 210
 sought asylum, 253
 sought kingship, 186
 succession, 211
 supplanted by Solomon, 223
 supported by brothers, 209
 Agade, 147
 Ahab, 19, 49, 208, 250
 Ahasuerus *see* Xerxes I
 Ahijah the Shilonite, 141, 237, 250

- Ahinoam, 166
 Ahuramazdā, 129, 158
 Akkad (or Agade), 150, 160, 274
 Akkadian sources, 160
 Alalah, 143
 Alexander the Great, 62, 155, 157
 altar, 35, 253, 277, 283, 285, 292
 Amalekites, 44, 109, 122
 Amasa, son of Jether, 210, 245–6
 Amenhotep III, 89, 155
 Amen-Re, 157
 Ammiel, 166, 168, 171, 173
 Ammon, 88, 92
 Ammonites, 32, 34, 44, 97, 100–1, 107,
 114–15, 117–18, 122–4, 166, 190, 240
 Amnon, 159, 186, 189
 death, 207
 firstborn of David, 220
 murdered by Absalom, 194, 209, 220,
 228, 246
 omitted by Chronicler, 234
 raped Tamar, 220, 228
 Amon, temple of, 156
 Amon-Re, 154, 156
 Amsterdam, 5
 anachronisms, 225, 307
 Anani, 289
 Anathoth, 250
 Anatolia, 88, 153
 Anshan, 151
 anthropology, 11
 anti-Solomonic tendency, 222
 Antoon Claeissens, 4
 Anu, 139
 Arabian trade, 48
 Aram, 89
 Beth Rehob, 100
 Zobah, 100
 Aramaic, 60, 225
 Arameans, 35, 43–5, 88, 92, 100–1, 114,
 124, 166
 Araunah *see* Ornan (Araunah)
 Arbela, 139–40
 archaeological surveys, 55, 84–5, 92
 archaeology, 11, 19, 24, 31, 40–1, 43, 46–7,
 54–5, 61, 63–4, 66–7, 73, 91, 159, 307
 archival sources, 81
 Ark Narrative, 262
 Ark of the Covenant, 72–3, 210, 238, 250,
 262, 264, 275–6, 288–9
 art, 4
 Arthur, 53
 Artobazanes, 158
 Asaph, 265
 Aššur, 139
 Aššurbanipal, 140, 142, 233, 250
 library, 145
 Aššur-rēš-iši I, 139, 233
 Assyria, 49, 88, 139–40, 149, 162
 Assyrian Empire, 49
 Assyrian records, 82
 Assyrian royal inscriptions, 24, 139
 Astyages, 151
 Athaliah, 261, 264, 268, 270–1
 sought asylum, 253
 Atossa, 158
 Austria, 206
 Azariah *see* Uzziah
 Azeret festival, 39
 Azupiranu, 145
 Babylon, 77–8
 Babylonian Exile, 33
 Babylonians, 70
 Bardiya, 151
 Barzillai, 202, 253
 reward, 245, 248, 252
 in the Succession Narrative, 219
 Basilica San Marco, 4
 Bathsheba, 97–100, 103, 115–16, 125, 134,
 136, 166, 204–5, 207, 211–13, 311
 birth of Solomon, 99
 children, 169
 comforted by David, 98, 109, 111
 conspirator, 227, 230
 exploited by Nathan, 212
 father, 166
 first child, 102–3, 108–9, 111, 115,
 117–18, 120, 122, 131, 167, 183, 314
 introduction, 220
 manipulated David, 213–14, 235
 name, 166
 name of child, 110
 personality, 212
 physical appearance, 192–4, 199
 Queen Mother, 217
 in the Succession Narrative, 219
 Bathshua 166, 168, 171–3 (*see also*
 Bathsheba)
 Beer-sheba, 81, 177
 Behistun Inscription, 129
 Bēl, 139

- Benaiah, 212, 216–17, 237, 260
 Ben-hadad II (i.e., Hadadezer), 141, 247
 Benjamin
 region, 55
 son of Jacob, 131, 267
 tribe, 133, 263, 266, 268
 Berosus, 24
 Bethel, 250
 Beth-shan, 80
 Beth-shemesh, 80
 betrothal, 269
 Bezalel, 283–4, 289
 binding of Isaac, 285, 294
 birth report, 108
 blood-guilt, 246, 253
 bloodshed, 276
 bodyguard, 207
 book of the acts of Solomon, 252
 book of the acts of the kings of Israel, 36
 book of the acts of the kings of Judah, 36
 burnt-offerings, 292
 Byblos, 286

 Cain, 110, 229
 Cambyes, 129
 Cambyes II, 151
 Canaan, 226, 267
 Canaanites, 101
 canonical lists, 182
 Cathedral di Monreale, 306
 cedar, 285
 census, 275
 characterization, 192
 Cherethites, 260
cherubim, 287, 289
 chiasm, 176, 292
 children, 3
 Chileab, 207
 Christian canon, 182
 Christian tradition, 295
 Chronicles
 additions, 38, 82, 173, 176, 179, 234, 242, 253, 255, 275, 280, 284, 291, 293
 anachronisms, 38–9, 281, 284–5
 anti-war theology, 277
 contradicts Samuel-Kings, 232
 emendations, 280
 goal, 314
 harmonizations, 38, 289, 313
 idealistic, 311
 literary methods, 308
 myth, 309, 313, 315
 omissions, 61, 252, 254, 258, 271, 280, 289
 reliability, 50
 rewriting of Samuel-Kings, 38
 Second Chronicler, 284
 selective, 313
 sources, 312
 Temple is central, 278, 289
 theology, 167, 280, 290, 294, 308, 311
 three-four pattern, 234
 Vorlage, 9–10, 49, 61, 172, 275, 280, 284, 287–8, 291, 309
 churches, 4
 City of David, 29, 46, 77, 80, 151, 256
 archaeology, 76–8
 repaired by Solomon, 76
 Classical Biblical Hebrew, 60
 cognomen, 132
 common source
 Samuel-Kings and Chronicles, 9, 49, 60–1
 comparison, 52–3
 Samuel-Kings and Chronicles, 8, 10, 12, 58
 compositional methods, 185
 compositional unity, 120
 concentric structure, 107, 114, 124
 contradictions, 170, 307
 contrast
 Samuel-Kings and Chronicles, 308
 coronation name, 135
 coronation protocol, 261, 269
 court
 European and American, 5
 prophet, 211, 216, 237
 records, 286
 royal, 80, 89, 92, 158, 215–16, 226, 249
 Solomon's, 198
 covenant, 206, 261
 crown, 261
 Crusaders, 70
 cultural contacts with Mesopotamia, 159–60
 culture
 Christian, 4, 307
 Islamic, 4, 307
 Jewish, 4, 307
 cypress, 285
 Cyrus II (the Great), 33, 129, 146, 151, 158, 266, 286

 Damascus, 88, 143
 Dan, 81, 177
 Danite, 283

darics, 38

Darius I, 129, 151, 158

David, 7, 29

affair with Bathsheba, 97, 99, 110, 112–14,

116, 118–19, 183, 312–13

appoints Solomon as king, 231

beloved, 132

birth, 128

brothers, 229

capture of Jerusalem, 151

census, 231

children, 203, 206

chosen by God, 140

chosen over his brothers, 229

comforted Bathsheba, 116

comforted Hanun, 115

commands building of the Temple, 255

confession, 122–3

conquests, 26, 79, 82, 86, 88, 277

coronation, 240–1

cover-up, 112

cursed by Shimei, 136

death, 210, 219, 228, 248

dedicated booty to God, 277

descendants, 289

desire to build the Temple, 273

did not rebuke Adonijah, 208

disqualified to build the Temple, 75, 253,

273, 275–6, 280, 294

divine election, 152, 154

dynasty, 23, 87, 113, 130, 167, 222–3,

231, 251, 260, 262, 270

empire, 78, 86, 89

exaltation, 87

existence, 48, 308

extra-biblical evidence, 19–21, 23

fled from Jerusalem, 210

health, 231

historicity, 47, 56

House of, 23

illness, 202–3, 214, 309, 313

impotence, 204

in the latter prophets, 165

instructed Solomon, 246, 275

invented, 56

justification, 223

kingdom, 41, 45–6, 48, 224

love for his children, 249

men of valor, 43–4

mental condition, 202, 204–5, 211, 231

mercy towards Absalom, 249

mourned Absalom, 249

mule, 260

murder of Uriah, 109, 112–14, 166

name, 132

officials, 203, 205

physical appearance, 192–4, 196, 199

physical condition, 202, 204–5, 211, 231

political activities, 114

pre-monarchic life, 186

promise to Bathsheba, 214–15

punishment, 108–9, 122, 231

reigned forty years, 37

sin, 109, 122, 231

sinless, 313

sons, 168–9, 235, 311

succession, 129

successor, 206

throne name, 133

unnamed son, 35

usurper, 140

vengeance, 246–7, 253

wars, 43–4, 46, 82, 100–1, 114–15, 280

wives, 90

David's Testament, 151, 210, 220, 229,

252, 256–7, 275, 309–11, 314

cover-up, 248

Deuteronomistic elements, 248, 250–1,

275

fulfilled by Solomon, 255, 257–8

justifies Solomon, 258

political elements, 245–7, 249, 252

religious elements, 250, 252, 254–5, 258

vengeance, 248

Dead Sea Scrolls, 224

deconstructionists *see* minimalists

Demaratus of Sparta, 158

Deuteronomistic History, 9, 33–4, 176, 178,

221, 250, 255

additions, 102–4, 106–7, 117, 218, 220,

222–5, 247, 250–2, 274–5, 310, 312

anachronisms, 37, 73, 312

contradictions, 36, 43

editorial additions, 36–7, 217

exaggerations, 36, 43

historical reliability, 43, 50, 67–8, 92,

315

inaccuracies, 36

inconsistencies, 46

legends, 312

omissions, 315

realistic, 309, 312–13, 315

- sources, 34–5, 37, 44, 49, 59, 106, 212, 222, 262, 309, 312, 315
- theology, 35
- Deuteronomistic law, 91
- die grosse Zügen*, 32
- diplomatic marriages, 45
- divine election, 129, 137, 140, 156
 - kingship, 129, 132
 - late-born sons, 228
- divine kingship, 243
- divine love, 147–8, 156–7, 161–3
- divine name, 180–1
- divine promises
 - conditional, 251, 294
 - fulfillment, 234
 - unconditional, 251
- divine revelation, 258
- division of the kingdom, 310
- Dor, 80
- dream, 3, 152, 238, 267
- Dūr-Šarru-kīn, 150
- dynastic succession, 206

- Ea, 139
- Eben-Haezer, 262–3, 270
- editorial methods, 185
- Edom, 31, 88, 92
- Edomites, 43–5
- Egypt, 21, 23, 49, 88, 90, 101, 135, 152, 154–7, 159, 164, 256, 267, 270–1
 - border, 82
 - cultural connections, 159
 - kings, 133
- Ein Rogel, 209
- Ekron, 84
- Elah, 151
- Elah Valley, 30
- Eli, 250, 263–4, 270–1
- Eliab, 166, 194–5, 199
- Eliam, 115, 166
- Elijah, 35, 121, 208, 250, 292–3, 315
- Elisha, 141, 237
- England, 53, 206
- Enlil, 139
- Ephraim, 116, 229
- epigraphy, 11, 19–22, 40, 42, 56, 60, 63, 66
 - lack of 10th-century evidence, 21–2
- Er, 125
- Erech, 261
- Esarhaddon, 139, 142, 149, 207, 233
- Esau, 152, 228
- Eshtaol, 188
- Esther, 205, 267
- Euphrates, 82, 89, 145
- Europe, 4
- Eve, 110
- Evil-merodach, 33
- exaggeration, 71, 77, 89, 91–2
- Ezra, 270

- Faynan, 31
- Feast of Booths, 39
- feasts, 281
- fifth ecumenical council, 197
- fig tree, 177
- fire from heaven, 291–3
- First Temple period, 160, 310
- folktales, 4, 48
- Franz Joseph I, 206
- fundamentalists, 11

- gardener, 146
- gatekeepers, 277
- Gath, 84
- Gaumāta, 129
- Gaza, 82–3
- genre, 60
- Gershon, 125
- Geshur, 209
- Gezer, 20, 26–7, 40, 43, 45, 49, 307
 - dowry, 43
 - gate, 25–6, 28
- Gezer Calendar, 20
- Gibeon, 3, 196, 199, 230, 232, 256, 258, 278, 309
- Gibeonites, 246, 249
- Gideon, 180
- Gihon Spring, 46, 78, 237, 259–61
- Gileadite, 219
- Gilgal, 240
- Gilgamesh, 53
- glory of the Lord, 290–3
- glosses, 224
- God
 - fight for Israel, 276
 - greatness, 282
 - loving-kindness, 291
- Goliath, 43–4
- Greek, 225

- Habsburg dynasty, 37
- Hadadezer *see* Ben-hadad II

- Hagar, 125
 Hahhum, 153
 Hamat, 143, 206
 Hamath, 254
 Hamath-Zobah, 82, 254
 Hammurabi, 5, 87
 Ḥanun, 114–15
 harem, 89–90, 92
 Ḥaremḥab, 133
 harlots, 3–4, 36, 121, 196, 257, 279
 Hasmonean period, 57
 Hasmoneans, 47–8
 Hatshepsut, 143, 155–7
 beloved by Amon-Re, 156–7
 daughter of Amon-Re, 156–7
 Ḥatti, 90
 Ḥatti Land, 153, 159, 163
 Ḥattušili I, 153
 Ḥattušili III, 143, 151–2, 154, 158, 163–4, 227
 Hazael, 141, 143, 227
 Hazor, 26–7, 40, 43, 45, 49, 80, 307
 gate, 25–6, 28
 Hebrews, 267
 Hebron, 48, 56, 87, 151, 209, 220, 240
 Ḥelam, 100–1
 Hellenistic Judaism, 62
 Hellenistic period, 56–7, 62–3, 224–5
 Herod the Great, 70
 Hezekiah, 19, 34, 53, 57, 87
hieros logos, 274
 High Chronology, 25–6, 40, 46, 84, 307
 high places, 71
 high priestly family, 270
 Hiram, 24, 35–6, 43–4, 114, 257, 280, 283, 285–6
 historical background, 10
 historical fiction, 53
 historical framework, 54
 historical reconstruction, 41, 54, 63, 97, 190
 challenges, 68, 308
 selective, 312
 historicity, 5, 11–13, 30, 66
 historiographical methods, 314
 historiography, 13
 history, 13
 Hittites, 88, 153
 Homer, 192, 268–9
 Hophni, 263–4
 House of the Lord, 71–3, 253
 Hungary, 206
 Hur, 283
 Hiramabi, 283–4, 289
 iconography, 73
 ideology, 11, 38, 40, 44, 47, 52–3, 58, 62–3, 66–7, 81, 87, 307–8, 312
 idols, 35, 283
 Idrimi, 143
 Idumeans, 44
 Immanuel, 177
 imperial ideology, 87
 inaccuracies, 307
 Inanna *see* Ištar
inclusio, 115–16, 124, 221, 244, 292
 infant mortality, 121
 inscriptions *see* epigraphy
 intergenerational transgression, 311
 intrigue, 201, 204, 210, 213, 216–17, 223, 227, 229, 231, 235, 237, 257, 294, 309–10, 313
 Iron IIA period, 25–6, 28, 30–1, 40, 80, 84
 Iron IIB period, 55
 Isaac, 116, 125, 152, 177, 228–9, 269
 Isaiah of Jerusalem, 87
 Ishmael, 121, 125, 152, 177, 229
 Islamic tradition, 295
 Israel
 archaeology, 31
 division from Judah, 41
 exile, 311
 historical reconstruction, 67
 historical turning points, 259–60, 262, 264, 269–70
 history, 32–3, 45, 54, 130, 284
 home territories, 81
 in the 10th century, 32
 kingdom, 49, 82, 135, 151, 160, 177, 206, 247
 kings, 128–9, 141, 193, 224, 307
 monarchy, 75
 neighbors, 21, 88
 northern tribes, 82, 86, 92, 206, 240
 population, 86
 prosperity, 49
 tribes, 81, 83, 240
 United Monarchy, 81–2, 88
 Ištar, 139–40, 147–8, 152–3, 161, 163, 261
 Jacob, 116, 152, 228–9, 267, 269
 divine election, 229

- Jair, 133
 James VI of Scotland and I of England, 206
 Jebusites, 73, 274, 285, 292
 Jechoniah (Jehoiachin), 19, 33, 141
 Jedidiah *see* Yedidyah
 Jehoahaz (Shallum), 134
 Jehoash *see* Joash
 Jehoiada, 261
 Jehoram, 19, 141, 206
 Jehu, 19, 141, 237
 Jericho, 250
 Jeroboam I, 53, 141, 237
 Jeroboam II, 37, 49, 53
 Jerusalem, 28–9, 88, 206, 257, 311
 in the 10th century BCE, 55, 77
 administrative center, 79–81
 archaeology, 20, 77, 307
 capital of Judah, 87
 chosen by God, 87
 daughters of, 191, 197
 destruction, 311
 divine choice of, 36
 Large Stone Structure, 29
 population, 48, 56
 priesthood, 250
 size, 48, 76–9, 81, 83–4, 89, 92
 United Monarchy, 87
 weakness, 88
 Jesse, 133, 194
 Jewish tradition, 295
 Jewish/Hebrew Canon, 182
 Jezebel, 250
 Joab, 117, 194, 209–12, 214, 216, 237,
 253, 310
 execution, 219, 247, 253
 killed Absalom, 249
 punishment, 245–6
 replaced by Benaiah, 217
 sought asylum, 253
 supported Adonijah, 247
 Joash (Jehoash), 37, 188, 209, 237, 253,
 262, 270
 coronation, 261, 264, 269
 crown, 261
 Job, 116
 John Calvin, 197
 Joppa, 285
 Joseph, 116, 229, 266–7, 270
 Joseph story, 266
 Joshua, high priest, 266
 Josiah, 33–4, 48, 141, 174, 177–8
- Judah
 in the 10th century, 32
 in the 7th century, 48
 archaeology, 31, 84
 capital, 87
 City of (Babylonia), 98
 coronation protocol, 261
 destruction, 311
 division from Israel, 41
 fourth son of Jacob, 174, 234
 highlands, 86
 history, 49
 imperial ideology, 87
 invasion by Sennacherib, 52
 kingdom, 23, 28, 30, 49, 57, 82, 87, 135,
 160, 177, 188, 206, 243, 247, 253,
 261–2
 kings, 49, 74, 128–9, 132, 135, 141, 193,
 202, 224, 307
 military capability, 86
 monarchy, 75, 212
 neighbors, 21, 88
 officials, 209, 235
 population, 56, 83–6, 92
 province *see* *Yehud Medinta*
 region, 30, 55, 83, 270
 settlement pattern, 56, 84, 86
 son of Jacob, 116, 125, 229, 234
 tribe(s), 151, 206, 234, 240, 266, 283
 United Monarchy, 82, 88
 villages, 48, 56
 wife, 125, 166
 judgment, 4, 36, 257, 307
 Julius Caesar, 52
 justice, 3, 35, 109, 167, 215
- Kadesh, Battle of, 90
kapporet, 287
 Karnak, 21–2, 42, 45, 156
 Katharinenkirche, Oppenheim am
 Rhein, 4
 Ketubim (Hagiographa, Writings), 39
 Khirbet Qeiyafa, 30
 archaeology, 30
 building model, 75
 ostrakon, 20, 23
 Khnum, 156
 Kilamuwa, 143
 killing of rivals, 213
 kingdom of the Lord, 242–3
 Kish, 133, 147

- La'ash, 206
 Land of Israel (Eretz Yisra'el), 19, 307
 Late Biblical Hebrew, 60, 225
 Lebanon, 257, 289
 legends, 48, 307, 309
 Levant, 21, 75, 86
 Levi, 174, 234
 Levites, 265, 277
 Libyans, 101
 literary analysis, 12
 literary device, 118, 242, 259–60, 262–3, 265, 267–70
 literary motifs, 118, 234
 literary structures, 107, 123
 literary techniques, 308
 literature, 4, 7, 13
 loan words, 58
 Low Chronology, 25–6, 40, 46, 80, 84, 307
 Lu'ath, 143
 Lugalzagesi, 148

 Maacah, 100
 Maccabees *see* Hasmoneans
 Macedonia, 155
 Magus, 151
 Mahaneh-Dan, 188
 Makere, 156
 Manasseh, 19, 37, 229
 Manetho, 24
 Maria Theresa, 37
 Masoretic Text, 218
 Mathaniah, 141
 maximalists, 11
 Medeba plain, 100
 Media, 151
 Mediterranean, 147
 Megiddo, 21, 26, 28, 30, 32, 40, 42–3, 45, 49, 80, 160, 307
 gate, 25–8
 Menachem, 19
 Menander, 24, 36
 Mephibosheth, 246
 mercenaries, 101
 Mesha inscription, 56, 61
 Mesopotamia, 88
 coronation protocols, 261
 cultural connections, 159
 metathesis, 287
 methodology, 11–12, 51–2, 61, 64, 66, 69, 75, 89, 224–5
 mighty men, 191

 mines, 31
 minimalists, 11, 41–2, 47, 50–1, 53–4, 56–7, 59, 61, 63–4, 66–8, 76, 81, 83, 85–6, 92, 315
 Mitanni, 88
 Mizpah, 240
 Moab, 56, 88, 92
 Moabites, 43–4
 Monreale Cathedral, 4
 Mordechai, 133, 267
 Moses, 5, 72, 104, 121, 125, 146, 161, 188, 229, 238, 251–2, 254, 258, 269, 272–3, 279–81, 283–4, 287–9, 291–2, 294, 309, 317, 319, 325
 Mot, 133
 mother's womb, 140, 233
 Mount Carmel, 35, 292–3
 Mount Gerizim, 285
 Mount Moriah, 285
 Mount Sinai, 290
 Muršili, 152
 music, 4–5, 259–60, 265–6, 268–70
 Muslims, 70
 Muwatalli, 152–3
 Mycenae, 53
 myth, 53

 Naamah, 189
 Nabonidus, 233
 Naḥash, 116
 Narām-Sîn, 153, 159, 161
 Nathan, son of David, 169, 173
 Nathan, the prophet, 97–8, 102, 105, 112, 128, 131, 138, 140, 162, 179, 204, 212, 237, 260, 275, 310
 advised Bathsheba, 211, 214
 conspirator, 212–13, 215, 227, 230
 difference between Samuel and Kings, 215
 fate, 216
 fictional, 211
 God's messenger, 215
 historicity, 211
 manipulated David, 211–12, 214, 235
 misled Bathsheba, 213
 named Solomon, 230
 not at Adonijah's party, 212
 parable, 108
 political calculation, 133–4
 prophecy *see* Nathan's prophecy
 rebuke of David, 114, 122–3

- Solomon's guardian, 186–8, 191
 son, 216
 in the Succession Narrative, 219
 supported Solomon, 136
 used Bathsheba, 212
 wise, 211
- Nathan's prophecy, 108, 130, 136
 in Chronicles, 275
 dating, 251, 274
 David, 229
 Davidic dynasty, 231
 fulfillment, 138, 176, 233, 250, 256–7
 Solomon, 137–8, 275, 294
 Temple, 231, 273
- nazirite* dedication, 128
- Nebû, 139–40
- Nebuchadnezzar, 141
- Neo-Babylonian period, 274
- New Moon, 281
- Nicolas Poussin, 4
- nihilists *see* minimalists
- Nile, 89
- Nimrod, 160
- Nineveh, 77–8, 139–40
- Nin-men-na, 261
- Nin-PA, 261
- northern Israel, 81, 206
- Nubia, 101
- Nubians, 101
- Oasis of Amon, 157
- Omri, 19, 24, 49, 81, 151
 dynasty, 25, 28, 49, 53
 founded Samaria, 151
 pre-Omride northern state, 79
- Onan, 125
- Ophir, 49
- Ornan (Araunah), 274, 285, 292
- paleography, 57
- Palermo, 4
- Palestine, 19, 47, 52–4, 61, 77, 86, 88
- parallels
 ancient Near East, 11–12
 Mediterranean, 11
- Pasargadae, 151
- Patriarchal Narratives, 228
- Paul, 182
- Pelethites, 260
- Persepolis, 151
- Persian Gulf, 147
- Persian king, 47
- Persian language, 60, 225
- Persian period, 47, 56–60, 62–3, 78, 101,
 224–5, 254, 275–7, 285, 289, 295
- personal union, 206
- Pharaoh, 266, 270
- Pharaoh's daughter, 43–5, 161, 188–9, 197,
 256, 258
- Philistines, 35, 43–4, 52, 82–4, 101, 262–4,
 270
- Phinehas, 263–4
- Phoenicia, 285–6
- physical appearance
 qualification for kingship, 194–5
- physical description, 193
- plague, 274
- political situation, 32, 88
- positivists, 11
- post-eventum* description, 140
- post-eventum* justification, 230, 313
- post-eventum* prophecy, 106, 176, 250
- post-exilic community, 58
- pottery, 27, 29
- Praise of the Ancestors, 179, 183
- priest, 152
- priestess, 145
- Priestly Code, 281
- priests, 265, 277
- punishment, 35, 102, 122, 183
- Qohelet
 name of Solomon, 181–2
 place in the canon, 182
 Solomonic fiction, 181
- Queen of Sheba, 3, 36, 196, 230, 232, 242,
 279
- Rabbah, 101, 107, 114–15, 117–19
- Rachel, 269
- radiocarbon (¹⁴C) dating, 26, 29–31
- Ramesses (Ramses) II, 90, 101, 152, 155
- Raphael, 4
- reception, 7, 166
- redaction, 6, 34, 52, 97, 107, 123, 171, 221,
 223–5, 308
- speculative, 224
- Rehoboam, 22, 43, 45, 92, 167, 189, 191,
 206–7, 311
- wives, 90
- relative chronology, 29
- reliability of the biblical texts, 42

- retribution theology, 109, 167, 183, 231
- Reuben, 174, 229, 234
- revelation, 102
- revisionists *see* minimalists
- Romans, 70, 132
- royal apology, 7, 10, 67, 113, 130, 140–3, 148, 151–2, 154, 163–4, 217, 227–8, 236, 247–8, 308–9, 313–14
- royal archives, 35, 100, 123, 189, 226
- royal mule, 260

- Sabbath, 281
- sacrifices, 240, 275, 282
- Samaria, 151
- Šamaš, 139
- Šamši-adad I, 153
- Šamši-adad V, 142
- Samson, 127, 188
- Samuel, 122, 127, 140, 194
- Sarah, 125
- Sardinia, 101
- Sargon I of Assyria, 150, 153
- Sargon II of Ashur, 143, 149–50, 152, 161–2
 - Ashdod stele, 160
- Sargon of Akkad, 143–5, 147–8, 150, 152–3, 159, 161–2
- Šarru-kin, 151
- Šarru-kin II, 143
- Saul, 44, 122, 124, 133, 136, 174
 - birth story, 127–8
 - confession, 122–3
 - coronation, 240–1
 - death, 49, 240
 - divine election, 235, 240
 - divine rejection, 124, 129, 140, 251
 - existence, 308
 - grandchildren, 246
 - historicity, 47
 - kingdom, 42, 82, 85, 224
 - period, 44
 - physical appearance, 192–6
 - pre-monarchic life, 186
 - sin, 122, 124, 141
 - succession, 129
 - wives, 90
- Scotland, 206
- scribes, 226
- Sebastian Castellio, 197
- Second Temple period, 39, 165, 175, 183–4, 281, 290, 308, 310, 314
- Semitic languages, 60
- Sennacherib, 52, 207
- Septuagint, 218
- Seth, 110, 125
- settlement pattern, 83–5
- Shakespeare, 52–3
- Shalmaneser V, 149
- Shechem, 206
- Shelah, 125
- Sheol, 116
- Shephelah, 84–5
- Sherden, 101
- Shiloh, 72, 250, 263, 270
- Shimea, 169, 173
- Shimei, son of Gera, 133, 136, 212, 253, 310
 - execution, 219, 244, 247, 253
 - punishment, 245–6
- Shimei, son of Kish, 133
- Shishak I (i.e., Shoshenq or Sheshonq), 21–2, 26, 32, 42–5, 82
 - campaign, 45
 - Karnak inscription, 42, 45
 - Megiddo inscription, 42
- Shishak Inscription, 61, 91
- Shishak Inscription at Karnak, 21–2
- Shishak Inscription at Megiddo, 21–2
- Shlomoh *see* Solomon:names
- Shobab, 169, 173
- shofar, 209, 238, 260–1, 265
- Shua, 116
- Shulammite, 197
- Shunammite *see* Abishag the Shunammite
- Sidon, 285
- Siloam Tunnel inscription, 57
- Simeon, 174, 234
- Sin, 139
- singers, 277
- skepticism, 11, 64
- Solomon, 138
 - age at his coronation, 189
 - apostasy, 310
 - appearance, 185
 - author of Song of Songs, 197–8
 - bed, 190
 - beloved by God, 113, 130–1, 136–7, 153, 159, 161, 163, 178, 230, 236, 310, 313
 - biblical sources, 32, 34, 40, 42, 307–8
 - birth, 97, 99, 114–15, 117–18, 123–4, 127–8, 162, 166, 168, 175, 183, 308, 311
 - book of the deeds of, 35
 - builder, 310

- builder of the Temple, 4, 49, 75, 137, 175,
 196, 231, 236, 253, 256–7, 278–9, 295,
 309–11, 314–15
 charge to build the Temple, 275
 childhood, 186, 189, 192
 chosen by God, 138
 climax of Succession Narrative, 221
 concubines, 89–91
 conspiracy, 217
 contrast with brothers, 189
 co-regency with David, 189, 211, 228,
 238
 coronated twice, 239–41
 coronation, 137, 186, 190, 237–9, 244,
 259–61, 269–70
 court, 158, 248–9, 252
 crown, 190
 David's heir, 192
 desire to build the Temple, 256
 diplomatic marriages, 90
 districts, 35, 49, 216
 divine election, 137, 152, 154, 163, 173,
 183, 201, 207, 222–3, 227–30, 232,
 235–6, 278, 308, 311, 313, 315
 downfall, 310
 elimination of rivals, 201, 244, 247, 252,
 256, 258, 303, 311
 empire, 78, 81–4, 86, 92, 138
 exaltation, 3, 74, 91, 244, 256, 260, 314
 excluded by Adonijah, 209, 213
 existence, 20, 31, 40, 42, 48, 67–8, 92,
 308
 expected successor, 313
 extra-biblical evidence, 19, 21, 23, 31–2,
 40, 42, 307
 family relations, 186
 foreign wives, 178
 fourth son of Bathsheba, 169–70, 172–3,
 183, 234
 fourth son of David, 221, 308
 greatest king, 4, 307
 harem, 309
 historical reconstruction, 69
 historicity, 41–2, 45, 47
 Hittite ancestry, 111
 in Chronicles, 37
 in the Deuteronomistic History, 32–5, 37
 incomparable, 3, 244, 256, 312
 international trade, 35, 43, 46, 48–9, 159,
 257, 285–6, 310
 judge, 310
 judgment, 3, 5, 186, 257
 kingdom, 40–4, 46, 48, 224
 legitimacy, 103–5, 111–13, 117, 124,
 135, 218, 223, 227, 235, 258, 308,
 310, 314–15
 legitimation, 136, 222
 length of reign, 189
 marriage to Naamah, 189
 marriages, 191, 310
 married Egyptian princess, 159, 190,
 256, 258
 model king, 314
 monumental construction, 25–9, 31
 mother, 190–1
 names, 110–11, 121, 125, 128, 130, 134–5,
 161, 166, 176–7, 179, 183, 233, 235,
 308–9, 311
 negative example, 311
 no active role in conspiracy, 227
 officials, 35, 77, 81, 83, 216, 230, 257
 palace, 289
 peace, 179–80, 183, 253, 257–8, 276
 physical appearance, 192, 194–7, 199
 poet, 3
 prayers, 36, 291, 293
 pre-monarchic life, 185–6, 191
 profligacy, 91
 qualifications for kingship, 195–6, 199
 reigned forty years, 37
 righteous, 184
 rise to power, 136, 162, 230, 257,
 313
 rule over Arameans, 45
 scholar, 3, 307
 sent Adonijah home, 228
 similar to Jacob, 229, 236
 sinless, 293, 311, 313
 sins, 36, 91, 293, 310
 speeches, 36
 statesman, 310
 succession, 46, 142, 201–2, 204, 210,
 216, 220–1, 227, 293, 309–10
 supported by all, 201, 231, 235–6, 253,
 271, 311, 313
 Temple builder, 289
 throne, 190
 upbringing, 188
 usurper, 137, 140
 wars, 82, 254
 wealth, 76, 309, 311
 wedding, 190, 198

- Solomon (*cont.*)
 wisdom, 3, 24, 36, 39, 105, 175, 181–2,
 184, 192, 195–6, 199, 254–5, 279,
 283, 295, 307, 309, 311
 wives, 89–91, 190
 word-play, 180
 Solomon's stables, 28
 Solon, 5
 Song of Songs
 metaphorical, 198
 Succession Narrative, 6, 32–4, 50, 98, 106,
 128, 148, 158, 163–4, 185, 188, 191–3,
 201, 209, 211, 213, 219, 221, 227, 230,
 236–7, 248–9, 252
 absence from Chronicles, 232
 ancient Near Eastern parallels, 300
 apologetic features, 227–8, 230, 235, 313
 conclusion, 244
 date of composition, 226
 definition, 219
 eyewitness tradition, 226
 favors Solomon, 223
 historical source, 225
 independent source, 217–19
 late additions, 221
 legitimation of Solomon, 221
 literary features, 259
 literary unity, 218–21, 226
 parallels, 225
 pro-Solomonic stance, 226
 sources, 226
 structure, 227
 three-four pattern, 183, 217, 220, 228,
 230, 234–5, 310
 Supreme Court, 5
 synagogues, 4
 Syrians, 101

 Taanach, 80
 Tabernacle, 238, 272, 279–82, 284, 287–90,
 292, 294, 309
 divine approval, 290–1
 Tamar, 116, 186
 physical appearance, 192–4, 199
 raped by Amnon, 220, 228
tāmīd burnt-offering, 39, 281
 Tel Dan inscription, 23–4, 42, 48, 56, 61,
 91, 133, 141
 Tel El-Amarna, 159
 Temple in Jerusalem, 29, 261, 264
 ancient Near Eastern parallels, 74–5, 274
 archives, 35
 building, 35
 command to build, 255
 constructed by Solomon, 70–6, 78, 92,
 256–8, 272–3, 277–8, 289, 294, 309
 constructed in 10th century BCE, 74
 construction materials, 277, 285
 construction report, 279
 continuity, 288–9
 court, 253
 craftsmen, 283
 cultic function, 282
 destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, 293
 divine approval, 273, 290–2, 294
 divine permission, 274
 doors, 284
 father-son collaboration, 277–8
 greatness, 282
 harmonized with the Tabernacle, 289
 heavenly-earthly collaboration, 277
 historicity, 69–76, 273
 holiness, 292, 295
 Holy of Holies, 39, 284, 287
 Holy Place, 39, 284
 House of Sacrifice, 281
 ideal, 295
 inauguration, 292, 294
 iron, 288
 Jebusite, 72–3
 location, 285, 292
 luxurious, 288
 model for the Tabernacle, 272
 modelled on the Tabernacle, 273
 not God's dwelling, 280, 282
 personnel, 255, 277
 place of God's name, 281
 plans, 277, 282
 predates Solomon, 70, 72–3
 preparations by David, 73, 151, 231, 255,
 277, 279, 288, 294, 309
 preparations by Solomon, 287
 promise to build, 233
 purpose, 280–1
 renovated by Solomon, 71, 92
 restoration, 271–2, 279
 Second Temple, 39, 265–6, 270, 273,
 284–5, 287–9, 294, 309
 small, 44
 symbolism, 74
 Temple Mount, 29, 76–8, 285
 unceasing existence, 293

- veil/drape/curtain, 39, 284, 287
- vessels, 35, 277, 282
- wealth, 288
- Zerubbabel, 280, 285, 287, 289, 294
- temple of Amon, 21, 42, 156
- temple of Ištar, 261
- Tent of David, 72–3, 238
- Tent of Meeting, 72, 290
- Tent of the Lord, 253
- Testament of David *see* David's Testament
- Thebes, 155–6
- theocracy, 243, 258
- Theodore of Mopsuestia, 197
- theology, 12, 38, 53, 58, 61, 67, 307–8, 312
- theophany, 291
- three-four pattern, 173–4, 183, 221, 234
- throne of David, 242, 244
- throne of Israel, 242
- throne of the Lord, 242–3
- Thutmose (Thutmosis) III, 155
- Thutmose I, 155
- Thutmose II, 155
- Timna, 31
- Tiphseh, 82–3
- Tirzah, 151
- Tob, 100
- Torah, 251, 254, 283, 294, 310–11, 313–14
- Transjordan, 81, 115, 118
- tribal leaders, 80
- triglyphs, 75
- trumpet *see* shofar
- Tukulti-Ninurta I, 160
- type-scenes, 268–9
- typological numbers, 37, 89, 121, 175, 189, 202
- Tyre, 24, 35–6, 43, 83, 89, 224, 257, 280, 283, 285–6
- Tyrian annals, 24
- Ugaritic literature, 238
- United Monarchy, 41, 46, 81, 88, 92
 - alliance, 86, 88
 - continuous narrative, 54
 - divided under Rehoboam, 206
 - existence, 67, 87
 - extra-biblical evidence, 46, 51
 - fictional, 315
 - historicity, 51–2, 55, 57, 63–4, 79
 - imaginary, 48–9, 63
 - invented, 47
- Ur III, 274
- Uriah the Hittite, 103, 105, 109, 111–13, 115–16, 118–20, 132, 135, 166, 212, 214, 313
- Uruk, 53
- Urzababa, the king of Kish, 146–8
- Uzziah (Azariah), 37, 134
- Vatican, 4
- vaticinium ex eventu see post-eventum*
- prophecy
- Vulgate, 186–7
- war, 276
- wedding, 269
- Wen-Amon, 286
- Wiederaufnahme*, 83, 108, 115, 117–18
- wisdom literature, 39, 165
- woman of Tekoa, 205
- word-play (pun), 180
- Xenophon, 101
- Xerxes I (Ahasuerus), 143, 158, 162, 205
- Ya'dy/Sam'al, 143
- Yam, 133
- Yediyah, 98, 120–1, 128, 130, 132, 136, 138–40, 142, 148, 161–3, 166–7, 172, 176, 178, 183–4, 212, 229–30, 299, 309
 - birth name, 134
 - cognomen, 132–3
 - honorary title, 131
 - royal legitimization, 147
 - word-play, 180–1
- Yehud Medinta*, 39, 47, 276, 289, 295, 311
- Zabud, 216
- Zadok, 212, 217, 237, 260
 - Jebusite-Canaanite, 212
 - replaced Abiathar, 217
- Zakar-Baal, 286
- Zakir, 143
- Zedekiah, 142
- Zerubbabel, 266
- Zimri, 151
- Zinjirli, 143
- Zion traditions, 87
- Zipporah, 269
- Zkr, 206
- Zobah, 254
- Zorah, 188

Source Index

Hebrew Bible / Old Testament

NB: Since references to Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles appear on nearly every page of this volume, only references to specific passages in these books are included in the index.

Except where otherwise specified, all references refer to the Masoretic Text, according to the numbering in *BHS*.

Genesis 51, 228, 270	18:29 98
2:2–3 89	18:31–32 98
4:1 71, 125, 204	21 229
4:1–2 121	21:3 125
4:1–5 229	21:9–13 152
4:7 121	21:12 121
4:22 121	21:14 121
4:25 110, 125	21:15 121
4:25–26 121	21:16 121
4:26 125	21:17 121
5:3 125	21:18 121
5:28–29 125	21:19 121
7:12 37	21:20 121
8:6 37	22:2 285
8:20 71	22:14 181
8:21 98	22:27 246
10:8–10 160	24:1–9 247
10:10 150	24:11–65 269
10:12 150	24:12–14 238
11:4–5 71	24:16 204
15:7–21 267	24:17–21 238
16–18 229	24:42–44 238
16:11 177	24:45–46 238
16:15 125	24:67 116
17:19 125, 177	25 228

- 25-27 236
 25:23 152, 229
 25:25 194
 26:23-24 229
 27 228
 27:1-28:5 247
 27:1-40 194
 27:11b 194
 27:11c 194
 27:29 152
 27:37 152
 27:40 152
 28:12-15 229
 29:1-13 269
 29:32-35 125
 30:6 125
 30:8 125
 30:11-13 125
 30:18-20 125
 30:24 125
 31:7 175
 31:41 175
 33:20 181
 34 174, 234
 35:7 181
 35:18 125, 125
 35:22 137, 213, 234
 35:22-23 174
 36:8 194
 37-50 186, 266
 37:5-12 267
 37:31-35 116
 38:2 166
 38:3 125
 38:4-5 125
 38:12 116, 166
 38:26 204
 41:1-7 238
 41:17-24 238
 41:51-52 125
 42:24 266
 43:30-31 266
 45:1-2 266
 45:14-16 267
 45:14-20 266-7
 45:16 268
 45:17-20 267
 49 247
 49:2-12 229
 49:3-12 174, 183, 234
 49:11-20 229
 Exodus 272
 1-15 267
 1:21 229
 2:1-10 104, 146, 161, 188
 2:3 121, 146
 2:6a 121
 2:6b 121
 2:7 121
 2:9 121
 2:10 125, 161
 2:11 188
 2:15-22 269
 2:22 125
 3-4 229
 3:18 89
 4:13 188
 5:3 89
 9:16 98
 13:8 98
 14:9 208
 14:14 276
 14:17-18 208
 14:23 208
 14:25 208
 14:28 208
 15:3 276
 15:4 208
 15:11 282
 15:17 282
 15:19 208
 15:22 89
 15:26 231
 17:15 181
 21:12-14 253
 21:14 253
 21:24 246
 24:16 290
 24:18 37
 25-31 272, 282
 25:1-31:11 238
 25:9 255, 282
 25:40 255, 282
 26:30 255
 26:31-33 284
 26:33 287
 29:37 292
 29:38-42 281
 31:2-5 283, 289
 31:4 283
 35-40 272
 35:4-39:43 238

35:30–35 283

35:32 283

35:33 283

35:35 283

36:35 284

40:33b–35 290–I, 293

40:34 290

Leviticus

I–7 28I

I:I 290

6:I2–I6 28I

9:24 29I, 293

I2:2 89

I6:2 287

I9:I7–I8 246–7

23 28I

23:I9 25I

23:33–36 39

25:4 89

25:8 89

25:23 243

26:I8 89

26:26 175

Numbers

6:I–2I 127

7:I0 292

7:I I 292

7:I2–83 238

7:84 292

7:88 292

I0:33 89

I3:25 37

I4:22 175

I4:33 37

I6:26 72

I6:26–27 72

I6:32 72, 73

2I:2I–35 8I

23:I 89

28–29 28I

28:3–8 28I

29:35–36 39

33:8 89

Deuteronomy 49, 50, 137, 248,

252

3:20 274

3:22 276

4:6 25I

4:29 25I

6:5 25I

7:6–8 136

7:I2 25I

7:I5 23I

7:25 35, 3I5

9:5 222

9:5C 25I

I0:I2 25I

I I:I 25I

I I:I3 25I

I2:4–I4 35, 3I5

I2:5 274, 28I

I2:I0 274

I2:II 274, 28I

I2:I4 36

I2:2I 274

I2:23–25 36

I3:4 25I

I4:23 274

I4:24 274

I5:20 36

I6:2 274

I6:6 274

I6:II 274

I6:I2 25I

I7:8 36

I7:I0 36

I7:I7 9I

I7:I8–I9 254

23:3 (ET, 23:2) 132

23:24 (ET, 23:23) 25I

24:8 25I

24:I6 35, 109, 167, 3I5

25:I9 274

26:2 274

26:I6 25I

28:I0 180

28:I3 25I

28:27 23I

28:35 23I

29:8 25I

30:2 25I

30:6 25I

30:I4 25I

3I:23 250

3I:24–32:47 252

33:I2 13I

Joshua

I:I–6 222

- 1:2 274
 1:6a 250
 1:7 274
 1:7a 250
 1:8 251, 254
 1:9a 250
 1:13 274
 1:15 274
 1:18b 250
 6:26 71, 250
 11:22 19
 19:18 203
 21:44 274
 22:3 251
 22:4 274
 22:5 251
 22:28 283
 23 252
 23:1 274
 23:10 276
 23:14 222
 23:14a 250
 24:1-28 252

 Judges 52, 69
 2:1-5 252
 5 52
 5:31 37
 6:24 180, 181
 7:22 249
 8:22-23 243
 8:28 37
 8:31 125
 11:1-12:7 81
 13 127
 13:1 37
 13:1-24 188
 13:5 127
 13:7 127
 13:14 127
 13:24 188
 13:25 188
 14-16 188
 18:31 72

 1 Samuel
 1 127
 1:7 72
 1:9 72
 1:17 127
 1:20 125, 127
 1:23 251
 1:24 72
 1:27 127
 1:28 127
 2:20 127
 2:22 72
 3:3 72
 3:12 222, 251
 3:15 72
 4 262-4
 4-6 262
 4:4-6a 262
 4:4-8a 262-3
 4:6 264, 268
 4:6b-9 262
 4:9a 250
 4:10-11 263
 4:12 263
 4:12-18 263-4
 4:13 263
 4:13-14 267
 4:13-14a 263
 4:14 264, 268
 4:14b-22 263
 4:17 264
 4:18 37
 4:21 125
 6 262
 8:4-22 243
 8:11 208
 9:1-10:16 186
 9:2 193, 195
 9:11-13 193
 9:16 224, 239
 9:16-10:1 235
 9:27-10:1 240
 10 193
 10-12 129
 10:1 224, 237, 239, 240
 10:17-24 240
 10:20-21 234
 10:23-24 195
 10:23c 193, 194
 10:24 238
 10:27 240
 11 81
 11:3 166
 11:5 147
 11:14-15 240

- 11:26 166
 12 252
 12:22 98
 13:14 224, 239
 13:19 19
 13:19-21 44
 14:47 31
 15 122, 123, 124, 298
 15:1 129, 235
 15:1-3 122
 15:1a 123
 15:3 122
 15:4 224
 15:8-9 122
 15:9 122
 15:10-11 129
 15:11 235
 15:13-15 122
 15:16-19 122
 15:17 129
 15:17b 123
 15:19 122
 15:20-21 122
 15:21 122
 15:22-23a 122
 15:23b 122
 15:24 122, 123
 15:25 122
 15:26-28 129
 15:26-29 122
 15:30a 122
 15:30b-33 122
 15:34-35 122
 15:35 235
 16:1-13 129, 157, 235, 240
 16:1-28:2 37
 16:1a 129
 16:6 195
 16:6-13 229
 16:7 195
 16:10-13 152
 16:11 147
 16:11-30:31 186
 16:12 193
 16:13 134, 237
 16:14 129
 16:18 193
 16:19 147
 17 43, 134, 276
 17:42 193
 17:47 276
 17:58 133
 18:10-11 246
 18:17-29 246
 19:1-24:3 246
 22:5 211
 22:17 208
 24-26 52
 24:4-20 246
 25:1 193
 25:30 224, 239
 26:1-2 246
 26:3-25 246
 27:1 20
 27:2-7 43
 28:4 203
 28:15-18 129
 29:1-30:31 37
 29:11 20
 31:9 20
 31:11-13 81
 2 Samuel
 1-24 37
 1:2 263
 1:10 190
 2:1a 98
 2:4a 240
 2:23-3:39 246
 2:32 245
 2:35-36 250
 3:2-5 90, 203, 220
 3:3 207
 3:4 235
 3:7 90
 3:7-8 137, 213
 3:9-10 129
 3:10 224
 3:12-13 250
 3:17-27 86
 3:26-30 245
 3:31-39 249
 5 173
 5:1-3 86, 206, 240
 5:2 129, 224, 274
 5:4-5 202, 247
 5:4-9 87, 151
 5:5 37, 206, 224
 5:6-8 76
 5:6-9 277

- 5:10 277
 5:11 43
 5:12 98
 5:13 90
 5:13-16 33
 5:14 99, 168, 169, 172, 203, 216, 220
 5:14-15 169, 234
 5:14-16 169
 5:21 35, 315
 5:25 277
 6:12 98
 6:13 281
 6:17 72, 238
 6:17-18 281
 6:21 224, 239
 7 6, 70, 176, 211, 223, 231, 256, 273, 274, 303
 7:1-17 274
 7:1 274, 275
 7:1-2 275
 7:1b 176, 177
 7:2 72
 7:5 274
 7:8 224, 235, 274
 7:8-9 129
 7:11 229, 274, 275
 7:11-12 229
 7:11b-12 250
 7:11c-13 138
 7:12-13 176, 256, 273-4, 275
 7:12-14 233
 7:12-15 274
 7:13 274
 7:14 294
 7:15-16 252
 7:16 243
 7:22 274
 7:22b-24 274
 7:23 274
 7:24 274
 7:25 222, 251
 8 43, 44, 46
 8:1 43
 8:1-14 78, 82
 8:1-15 275, 277
 8:1a 98
 8:2 79
 8:3 254
 8:6 79
 8:7-11 305
 8:8 277
 8:10-12 277
 8:10c-12 277
 8:11-14 31
 8:13 203
 8:14 79
 8:15 277
 8:17-18 77
 8:18 101
 9 221, 300
 9-10 50
 9-20 32, 98, 128, 129, 185, 218, 219, 220, 221, 224, 297
 9:1 98
 9:3 194
 9:7 98
 9:13 194
 10 43, 100
 10-12 14, 32, 34, 128, 129, 135, 162, 163, 220, 221, 297, 298, 299
 10:1-5 100, 114
 10:1-19 100, 107, 117, 118, 122, 166, 298
 10:1-11:1a 35
 10:1-11:1a-b 115
 10:1-11:1 275
 10:1a 98
 10:2 115, 119, 124
 10:6-14 100, 101
 10:6-19 114
 10:15-19 100, 101
 10:19 79, 101
 11 105, 118
 11-12 7, 10, 14, 16, 90, 123, 124, 130, 163, 219, 220, 236, 315
 11-19 6
 11:1 100, 114, 122
 11:1-12:25 230, 231, 298
 11:1a 101
 11:1a-b 100, 101, 107, 115, 117, 118, 166
 11:1b 117, 118
 11:1c 118
 11:1c-12:15a 115
 11:1c-12:24 213
 11:1c-12:25 98, 107, 113, 114, 117, 119, 120, 122, 123, 124, 128, 166, 168, 298
 11:2 99, 115, 120, 193, 194
 11:2-27 104, 122
 11:2-27a 103
 11:2-12:23 117
 11:2-12:25 103
 11:2b 194

- 11:3 115
 11:3-4 212
 11:4 116, 119
 11:5 115
 11:6 119
 11:7 119
 11:8-13 112
 11:11 119
 11:14 188
 11:14-25 109
 11:15-18 119
 11:17 118
 11:20-21 119
 11:23-24 119
 11:26 115
 11:27 105, 108, 109, 167, 168, 213
 11:27a 103, 104, 120, 121
 11:27b (ET, 12:1) 97, 102, 103, 104, 105, 108, 110, 111, 120
 11:27b (ET, 12:1)-12:10 122
 11:27b (ET, 12:1)-12:14 105
 11:27b (ET, 12:1)-12:24a 103, 105
 11:27b (ET, 12:1)-12:25a 124
 12 15, 97, 123, 159, 170, 175, 211, 212, 215
 12:1 119
 12:1-10 106, 109
 12:1-12 315
 12:1-14 103, 105
 12:1-15 108
 12:1-15a 102, 103, 104, 108
 12:1-24a 104
 12:1-25 97
 12:3 119, 123
 12:7 108, 123
 12:7-12 103
 12:7a 103, 215
 12:7b-10 103
 12:8 90, 210, 213
 12:8b 137
 12:9 106, 119, 120
 12:9b 106, 120
 12:9d 106
 12:10 106, 115, 136
 12:10b 120
 12:11 120, 210
 12:11-12 103, 106, 122
 12:13 109, 122
 12:13-14 106, 109
 12:13-23 35, 118, 168, 315
 12:13b 109
 12:14 121
 12:14-15 122
 12:14-23 136, 167
 12:14b 109
 12:15 115, 121, 135
 12:15b 102, 105, 108
 12:15b-23 108, 109, 111, 115, 121
 12:15[b]-24a 103, 104
 12:16 121
 12:16-17 122
 12:18 121, 121
 12:18-19 122
 12:19 121
 12:20 71
 12:20-23 122
 12:21 98
 12:21-22 121
 12:24 108, 110, 115, 116, 117, 119, 124, 125, 131, 134, 135, 176
 12:24 (*Qerê*) 125
 12:24-25 14, 15, 97, 98, 114, 115, 117, 118, 121, 122, 126, 127, 129, 130, 136, 138, 162, 167, 168, 176, 178, 185, 195, 220, 227, 229, 230, 232, 297, 299
 12:24a 109
 12:24b 103, 104, 105, 108, 110, 120
 12:24ba 104
 12:24d 130, 131
 12:24d-25 109, 121, 130, 135, 136, 138, 140, 141, 143, 159, 161, 162, 163, 299, 300
 12:25 16, 99, 103, 131, 178, 179, 180, 183, 186, 187, 188, 230, 233, 303
 12:26 100, 115, 117, 118, 122
 12:26-31 35, 100, 101, 107, 114, 115, 117, 166, 275, 298
 12:26a 118
 12:30 122, 190
 13 159, 220
 13-19 186
 13-24 185
 13:1 193, 194
 13:1-30 207
 13:1-33 186
 13:1-39 194
 13:1a 98
 13:2 98
 13:23-39 246
 13:24-39 209
 14-18 159
 14-19 194, 221

- 14:5 205
 14:24 210
 14:25 208
 14:25-26 193
 15 210
 15-18 214
 15:1 207, 208
 15:1-12 194
 15:2-5 208
 15:2-18:17 209
 15:6 208
 15:7-13 208
 15:7-17:29 246
 15:10 209
 15:11 209
 15:15 109
 15:16 90
 15:18 101
 15:19 141
 15:23b 141
 15:26-28 141
 15:36 188
 16:1 141
 16:1-4 194, 300
 16:1-13 140
 16:5-8 136
 16:5-13 245
 16:7-8a 136
 16:16 238
 16:21 137
 16:21-22 90, 210, 213, 249
 16:22 106
 17:27-29 245
 17:29 249
 18:5 245, 246, 249
 18:9-15 194, 207, 245
 18:12 245, 246, 249
 18:14-15 249
 18:32 246
 19:1 246
 19:1-2 (ET, 18:33-19:1) 249
 19:1-5 (ET, 18:33-19:4) 245
 19:5 (ET, 19:4) 249
 19:6-7 108
 19:19-24 (ET, 19:18-23) 245
 19:25-31 (ET, 19:24-30) 221, 300
 19:32-40 (ET, 19:31-39) 245, 249
 19:33 (ET, 19:32) 202
 20:3 90
 20:7 101
 20:8-10 245, 246
 20:23 101
 21 246
 21-24 218
 21:1-14 246
 21:7 246
 21:8 249
 21:11 90
 21:19 43
 21:19b 134
 22:51 129
 23 44, 46
 23:1-3 129
 23:8-23 277
 23:8-39 43
 24:1 224
 24:2 81, 173
 24:5 202
 24:9 224
 24:10 109
 24:11-19 211
 24:15 81
 24:17 109, 203
 24:18-25 274
 24:25 275, 277, 285, 291

 1 Kings
 1 17, 163, 185, 187, 201, 204, 205, 211,
 212, 215, 217, 218, 224, 232, 235,
 240, 241, 253, 264, 294, 300, 305
 1-2 6, 10, 14, 14, 15, 15, 16, 33, 34, 46, 50,
 98, 128, 129, 135, 136, 138, 159, 162,
 163, 164, 168, 185, 191, 201, 212, 217,
 218, 219, 220, 221, 225, 227, 229, 235,
 236, 257, 297, 299, 303, 304, 315
 1-11 49, 165
 1:1 203
 1:1-4 202, 204, 231, 246
 1:1-4b 203
 1:1-29 221
 1:1-53 136, 225
 1:1-2:11 218, 219
 1:1-5:15 (ET, 1:1-5:1) 278
 1:1a 202, 204
 1:1b-4 204
 1:2 203
 1:2d-e 204
 1:3 203
 1:4 193, 197
 1:4b 204
 1:4c 203
 1:5 207, 208

- I:5-6 208, 223
 I:5-8 204
 I:5-10 186
 I:5-27 213
 I:5-40 152
 I:5-53 202, 204, 231
 I:5a 209
 I:5b 208
 I:6 136, 193, 196, 209, 210, 221
 I:6a 208
 I:6c 207
 I:7 209, 237
 I:8 237
 I:8-10 212
 I:9 186, 209, 235
 I:9-10 186, 209
 I:9c 209
 I:10 216, 237
 I:11 135, 209, 213, 220
 I:11-14 213
 I:11-31 136
 I:11-37 237
 I:11-40 137, 138, 186
 I:11-53 230
 I:12 213
 I:12a 214
 I:13 213, 214, 223
 I:14 214
 I:15-16 205
 I:15b + c 204
 I:15c 204
 I:16 215
 I:16b 205
 I:17 214, 223
 I:18 213
 I:18-19 214
 I:19 235
 I:20 206, 207, 214, 223, 232
 I:22-23 205
 I:23 204
 I:23-27 215
 I:23b 215
 I:24 223
 I:24-25 213
 I:25 186, 235, 238
 I:26 212, 216
 I:27 223, 232
 I:27b 207
 I:28-31 205
 I:28-35 215
 I:30 221, 222, 223
 I:31-34 221
 I:32 204, 205, 237
 I:32-35 232, 238
 I:35 206, 222, 223, 224, 239, 274
 I:35-37 221
 I:35-40 241
 I:35b 224
 I:36-37 216
 I:37 223, 245
 I:38 101, 208, 237
 I:38-40 191, 238
 I:38-41 16, 238, 259-60, 264, 271
 I:38-45 221
 I:39 209, 241, 261
 I:40 260, 264, 305
 I:41 209, 260, 264
 I:41b 264, 268
 I:42-43 264
 I:43 232
 I:44 101, 237
 I:44-48 238
 I:45 264
 I:46 223, 228, 238, 242
 I:46-48 205, 221
 I:47 205, 216, 223, 245
 I:47b-48 231
 I:48 137, 189, 211, 222, 230, 232
 I:49 209, 210
 I:49-53 221
 I:50 72
 I:50-53 228, 253
 I:52-53 186
 2 16, 218, 219, 248, 249, 253, 255, 258,
 304, 315
 2-11 219
 2:1 226, 245
 2:1-2 221
 2:1-9 222, 245-52, 255, 275, 303, 304
 2:1b-9 248
 2:1-12 247, 248
 2:1-46a 218
 2:2-4 36, 36, 223, 225, 245, 250, 252, 253,
 275
 2:2b-4 254
 2:2-9 245, 252
 2:2a 250
 2:2b 250
 2:3 250
 2:3-4aß 222
 2:4 222, 223
 2:4aα-11 221

- 2:4b 251
 2:5 133
 2:5-6 210, 247, 253
 2:5-9 245, 247, 248, 252
 2:5-46a 226
 2:7 133, 245
 2:8 133
 2:8-9 245, 247
 2:10-12 247
 2:10-46a 303
 2:11 37, 202, 219
 2:11-12 36
 2:11-12a 244
 2:12 218, 219, 222, 224, 244
 2:12-46 219
 2:12a 238, 242
 2:12b 244, 247
 2:13 204
 2:13-23 221
 2:13-25 136, 202, 204, 213, 244
 2:13-46 256
 2:13-46a 244, 247
 2:13-3:2 294
 2:15 16, 137, 140, 143, 149, 163, 164, 230,
 232, 300
 2:15a 207
 2:15b 207, 229
 2:17 210
 2:19 217, 223
 2:19-20 205
 2:22 136, 207, 210, 237
 2:22-24 163
 2:24 137, 138, 140, 143, 164, 221, 223,
 229, 230, 232, 250, 300
 2:25-26a 221
 2:26 210, 250
 2:26-27 244
 2:26b-27 221
 2:27 222
 2:27b 250, 304
 2:28 237, 238, 247
 2:28-29 72
 2:28-31a 221
 2:28-34 253
 2:28-35 244
 2:31 246
 2:31-33 247, 248, 253
 2:31b-33 221, 247, 248
 2:33 223
 2:34-37a 221
 2:36 71
 2:36-46a 244
 2:37b 221
 2:38-41 221
 2:39 43
 2:42a 222
 2:42b 221
 2:43a 222
 2:43b 221
 2:44 247
 2:44-45 221, 247, 248
 2:45 223
 2:46 221, 224
 2:46b 36, 244, 247
 3 175, 218, 303
 3-5 6
 3-10 137, 199
 3-11 33, 38
 3:1 43, 159, 190, 197, 256, 304
 3:1-2 71, 256
 3:2 71, 244
 3:3 36
 3:3-15 256
 3:4-15 3, 304
 3:4b 36
 3:5-14 196, 199, 302
 3:6 222
 3:6-9 181
 3:7 189
 3:7a 137, 230, 232
 3:9 302
 3:9-10 196
 3:12 3
 3:12-14 294
 3:16-27 3, 36, 121
 3:16-28 4, 196, 257, 279
 3:16-5:15 278
 3:19 121
 3:25 3
 3:28 3
 4 49, 230
 4:1-6 35
 4:1-19 83
 4:1-5:14 257
 4:2-6 77
 4:5 216, 230
 4:7-19 35, 64, 80, 81, 82
 4:12 249
 5-9 74
 5:1 (ET, 4:21) 43, 78, 82, 83
 5:2-3 (ET, 4:22-23) 36
 5:4 (ET, 4:24) 37, 43, 82, 176

- 5:4-5 (ET, 4:24-25) 110, 177
 5:4a (ET, 4:24a) 83
 5:5 (ET, 4:25) 224
 5:5b (ET, 4:25b) 81
 5:6 (ET, 4:26) 207
 5:9-14 (ET, 4:29-34) 3, 196, 199, 279, 302
 5:9-19 (ET, 4:29-5:5) 255
 5:9-32 (ET, 4:29-5:18) 255
 5:15 (ET, 5:1) 43
 5:15-26 (ET, 5:1-12) 43
 5:15-28 (ET, 5:1-14) 257
 5:15-9:9 (ET, 5:1-9:9) 73, 114
 5:16-19 (ET, 5:2-5) 70, 280
 5:16-9:9 (ET, 5:2-9:9) 278
 5:17 (ET, 5:3) 71, 274, 275
 5:17-19 (ET, 5:3-5) 275
 5:18 (ET, 5:4) 177, 274
 5:19 (ET, 5:5) 39, 71, 137, 274, 281
 5:19a (ET, 5:5a) 281
 5:19-20 (ET, 5:5-6) 257
 5:21 (ET, 5:7) 196, 199, 302
 5:22-25 (ET, 5:8-11) 286
 5:23 (ET, 5:9) 285
 5:24-25 (ET, 5:10-11) 285
 5:26 (ET, 5:12) 196, 199, 302
 5:26-28 (ET, 12-14) 255
 5:27-32 (ET, 5:13-18) 36
 5:29 (ET, 5:15) 71
 5:29-32 (ET, 5:15-18) 71
 5:30 (ET, 5:16) 77
 5:32 (ET, 5:18) 71
 6 35, 70, 71, 285
 6-7 74, 76
 6:1 75, 304
 6:1-3 71
 6:1-7:51 257
 6:4 71
 6:4-10 288
 6:4-18 280
 6:5 71
 6:7 71, 288
 6:9 71
 6:10 71
 6:11-13 293
 6:12 222, 251
 6:14 71
 6:14-18 288
 6:15-17 71
 6:18-38 71
 6:19b 288
 6:23-29 287
 6:24-25 287
 6:25-27a 280
 6:27 287
 6:28-30 288
 6:28-35 76
 6:28-38 280
 6:31-32 284
 6:37 304
 6:37-38 71, 75, 256, 258, 278
 6:38 289
 7:1 71, 289
 7:1-12 256, 289
 7:8 190
 7:8b 256
 7:11 289
 7:13 43
 7:13-14 283
 7:13-51 35
 7:23 36
 7:40 43
 7:45 43
 7:50b 284
 8 293
 8:1 181
 8:4 72, 238, 294
 8:7-13 141
 8:10-11 290, 291, 292
 8:13-61 36, 36
 8:16 36, 281
 8:16-20 274
 8:20 222
 8:20a 251
 8:25 251
 8:27 282
 8:29 274
 8:44 36, 274
 8:48 36
 8:49 274
 8:54 291, 293
 8:65 254
 8:66 231
 9-10 141
 9-11 6
 9:1 289
 9:1-9 36
 9:3 281
 9:4-9 294
 9:5-7 251
 9:10 289
 9:10-13a 35
 9:10-11:43 278

- 9:11-13 38
 9:11-14 43
 9:14 76
 9:15 25, 26, 43, 52
 9:15-17 27
 9:15a 76
 9:16 43, 159, 256
 9:17 25
 9:18 82, 254
 9:19 207
 9:20 173
 9:20-22 36
 9:23 77
 9:24 256
 9:24a 256
 9:26 31
 9:27 43
 9:28 76
 10 43, 303
 10:1-10 36, 302
 10:1-13 196, 279
 10:3-9 3
 10:9 137, 242
 10:9-10 230, 232
 10:10-27 76
 10:11 43
 10:11-12 35
 10:13 217
 10:14 36
 10:17 289
 10:18-20 190
 10:21 289
 10:22 43
 10:24-25 79
 10:26 207
 10:27 36
 10:28 173
 10:28-29 159, 207
 11 52, 196, 302, 310, 315
 11-12 141
 11:1 256
 11:1-2 90
 11:1-3 76
 11:1-4 190
 11:1-9 36
 11:1-10 315
 11:1-13 91, 178
 11:1-41 294
 11:2 36
 11:3 36, 89, 90
 11:4 36
 11:6 36
 11:7-8 33
 11:9-13 36
 11:10-13 36
 11:11-13 167
 11:13 36
 11:14-22 31
 11:14-25 45
 11:14-28 82
 11:23-25 88
 11:27 76
 11:32 36
 11:36 36
 11:29-39 36
 11:41 35, 252
 11:41-43 36
 11:42 37, 189
 11:43 206
 12 49, 311
 12:1-16 206
 12:15 222, 250
 12:15c 251
 12:17 206
 13:1-2 250
 13:2 177
 13:29-32 250
 14 141
 14:7 224, 274
 14:17 121
 14:19 36
 14:21 189, 302
 14:25 43, 45
 14:25-28 21
 14:27-28 208
 14:29 36
 15:7 36
 15:13 217
 15:16-20 52
 15:28-29a 213
 15:29-30 167
 15:31 36
 16:1 224
 16:2 274
 16:8-20 151
 16:10-12 213
 16:12 167
 16:13 167
 16:15 281
 16:15-20 151
 16:21-22 151
 16:23-29 151

- 16:34 250
 17:17–24 121
 18:30–32 35, 315
 18:36–39 292
 18:38 292
 18:46 208
 19:8 37
 19:10 35, 315
 19:14 35, 315
 20:5 224
 20:26a 101
 20:31 247
 21:9 246

 2 Kings 52
 3:20 281
 4:8 203
 4:12 203
 4:17–18 121
 4:25 203
 4:32–36 121
 4:36 203
 5:2 19
 5:4 19
 6:23 19
 9:1–14 237
 9:11–10:14 213
 9:36–37 250
 10:10 250
 10:17 250
 10:25 208
 11 261, 264, 271
 11:1–21 37
 11:4 208
 11:6 208
 11:11 208
 11:12 190, 209, 238, 261
 11:12–14 237, 261, 265
 11:13–14 261, 264, 268
 11:15–16 253
 11:19 208
 11:29–31 237
 12:1–22 37
 14:6 35, 109, 168, 315
 14:23–29 37
 15:1–7 37
 16:10 283
 17:7–23 252
 20:5 239
 21:1–18 37
 22:1 178

 22:8a 251
 23:13 178
 23:13–14 33
 23:16–18 250
 24:8–17 142
 24:15 217
 25:9 293
 25:27–30 33

 Isaiah 67, 87
 5:1 131, 132
 5:12 286
 7:14 177
 9:6 165
 14:29 20
 14:31 20
 16:5 165
 20:1 143
 29:1 165
 41:21 243
 42:13 276
 43:15 243
 44:6 243
 49:1 139, 177, 233
 52:7 243
 53:4–11 109
 61:10 190
 63:9 180
 66:1 276, 282

 Jeremiah 168
 1:4–5 139, 177, 233
 3:17 243
 7:10 281
 7:14 281
 11:15 180
 13:18 217
 14:9 180
 17:25 165
 22:2 165
 22:20 166
 22:30 165
 29:2 217
 29:3 188
 29:10 222
 31:28–29 109
 31:29–30 168
 33:16 181
 36 20
 36:30 165
 52:13 293

Ezekiel 168, 272

18:2 109, 168

18:20 109, 168

20:33 243

26:7 208

27:17 19

28:2 224, 239

34:24 165

36:36 71

37:22–25 243

37:24 165

40–48 272

40:2 19

46:13–15 281

47:18 19

48:34 266

48:35 181

Hosea

1:4 125

1:6 125

1:9 125

3:5 165, 243

Amos

2:12 127

9:11 165

9:14 71

Jonah

3:4 37

Micah

5:5 160

Haggai

2:1–9 288

2:3–9 265

Zechariah

9:6 132

9:10 147

12:7 165

12:8 165

12:12 169

13:1 165

14:3 276

Psalms 15, 67, 165, 166, 178, 183,

301

2 87

2:7 156

7 87

18:51 (ET, 18:50) 129

19:13 (ET, 19:12) 310

23 87

24:8 276

60:7 (ET, 60:5) 132, 180

68 87

72 39, 177

72:1 165

72:3 177

72:7 177

72:8 147

76:13 239

78 87

78:60 72

78:70–72 129

86:8 282

89 87

89:4 (ET, 89:3) 235

89:4–38 (ET, 89:3–37) 129

89:40 (ET, 89:39) 190

95:10 37

98:6 243

108:7 (ET 108:6) 132, 180

127 39, 178

127:1 71, 165

127:1a 178

127:2 132, 178

132 87

132:8 276

132:17–18 190

144:12 283

Proverbs 3, 5, 165, 182

1:1 39, 165

10:1 39

20:22 247

24:29 247

25:1 39, 165

26:6 188

Job

1:2–3 89

10:4 195

19:3 175

42:11–13 116

42:12–13 89

42:14 125

Song of Songs 3, 5, 165, 182, 198, 199, 200,

302

1:1 39, 165, 197

1:5 39, 165, 197

3:6–11 190, 191, 198, 199, 200, 302

3:7 191, 197
 3:7-11 39, 165, 190
 3:9-10 191
 3:10 191
 3:11 190, 191, 197
 5 198
 5:10-16 197, 198, 199, 200, 302
 6:8 90
 7:1 (ET, 6:13) 197, 203
 8:11 197
 8:11-12 39, 165
 8:12 197

Ruth

2:2 133

Qohelet / Ecclesiastes 3, 5, 15, 165, 181,
 182, 184
 1:1 39, 166, 181
 1:12-13 181
 1:16-18 181
 2:4-9 181
 6:2 182
 7:20 310

Esther 267

1:5 89
 1:10 89
 2:3 90
 2:5 133
 2:9 89, 90
 2:10 90
 2:13 90
 3:13 188
 4:1 267
 4:4 267
 5:3 205
 5:6 286
 6:8b 237
 6:9-11 237
 7:2 286
 7:7 286
 7:8 286

Daniel

1:5 286
 1:8 286
 1:16 286
 1:20 175

Ezra 270, 287, 305

1:1-3 33
 3:1-6 281

3:7 286, 287
 3:10-4:3 265
 3:10b-13 265
 3:12-13 288
 3:12d-13 265
 3:13 265
 4:1 265, 266
 4:1-3 265-6, 268
 6:3 281

Nehemiah 15, 161, 165, 166, 178, 183,
 184, 287, 301, 311
 10:33-34 (ET, 10:32-33) 281
 13:26 3, 39, 141, 165, 178, 232, 311,
 312
 13:26a 178
 13:26b 178

1 Chronicles

1:1-3:4 168
 2:3 166
 2:35 217
 2:36 216
 3 169, 171, 174
 3:1 166, 207
 3:1-3 170, 172
 3:1-5 171
 3:1-8 174
 3:1-9 203
 3:2 235
 3:4a 171
 3:5 38, 99, 152, 165, 169, 171,
 306
 3:5-6 169, 234, 303
 3:5-9 168, 171
 3:5c 168, 169, 170, 171, 173, 174
 3:6-8 172
 3:8 171
 3:9 172
 3:10-9:44 168
 3:15 141, 174
 3:15-16 170
 3:22-24 171
 3:23 289
 5:1-2 229
 5:13 171
 7:1 171
 7:22-23 116, 125
 8:33 174
 9:39 174
 10:13-14 141
 11:2 239
 11:4-7 277

- 11:9 277
 11:11-25 277
 14 169
 14:1-3 172
 14:4 99, 172
 14:4-6 169, 280
 14:4-7 169, 171
 14:17 277
 16:40 281
 17 176, 216, 231, 256
 17:1-15 275
 17:7 235
 17:11-12 176, 256
 17:11-13 233
 17:13 294
 17:14 232, 242
 18:1-14 277
 18:3 254
 18:8-11 305
 18:8b 277
 18:10-11 277
 18:14 277
 19:1-20:3 166
 19:7 100
 20:2 190
 20:5b 134
 21:1-17 168
 21:2 19, 173
 21:9 211
 21:24-30 279
 21:26 291
 21:26-22:1 285
 22:1-26:32 279
 22 256
 22-29 277
 22:1 275
 22:2-3 288
 22:2-19 255
 22:2-29:25 305
 22:5 257
 22:5-11 233
 22:5-19 38, 255, 304
 22:6-11 139
 22:7-10 70, 179, 236, 253, 280,
 303
 22:7-19 252
 22:8 276
 22:8-9 180
 22:8-10 233
 22:9 157, 176, 177
 22:9a 276
 22:9b 276
 22:10 233
 22:10C-13 254
 22:11 255
 22:11C-13 254
 22:12-13 255
 22:13b 255
 22:14 254-5
 22:16b-19 278
 23:1 38, 231, 238, 241, 242, 255
 23:1-32 231
 24:1-19 231
 25:1-31 231
 26:1-32 231
 28 256
 28-29 38, 231, 242
 28:1-7 179
 28:1-10 242
 28:1-29:5 304
 28:1-29:25 279
 28:2 276
 28:2-29:20 252
 28:3 253, 276, 280
 28:4-5 137, 183, 234, 303
 28:5 157, 242
 28:6 233
 28:9 177
 28:9-10 254
 28:10-19 255, 275
 28:10-29:5 255
 28:11 254, 275, 282, 287
 28:11-19 277, 282
 28:12 282
 28:18 282
 28:19 282
 28:20 254
 28:20a 255
 28:21 278
 29 241
 29:1 133, 189
 29:1-10 70
 29:7 38
 29:11 232, 243
 29:12 245
 29:18-19 254
 29:19 177
 29:20-21 256
 29:20-24 255
 29:20-25 238, 240, 241, 242

- 29:21 240
 29:22 238, 239, 240, 242
 29:22-24 241
 29:23 239, 242
 29:23-24 256
 29:23-25 235
 29:24 271
 29:25 244, 256
 29:26-28 244
 29:29 211, 216
- 2 Chronicles
 1 8
 1-9 37, 38, 165
 1:1 3, 133, 235, 244, 245
 1:1-13 256, 304
 1:3 258, 304
 1:8b 232
 1:9b 137, 232
 1:10 302
 1:11b 182
 1:12 3, 294
 1:12b 245
 1:18 (ET, 2:1) 256, 281
 1:18-5:1 (ET, 2:1-5:1) 278
 1:18-7:22 (ET, 2:1-7:22) 278
 2:1 (ET, 2:2) 257
 2:1-5:1 (ET, 2:2-5:1) 258
 2:2-9 (ET, 2:3-10) 280
 2:2-11 (ET, 2:3-12) 255
 2:2-15 (ET, 2:3-16) 257
 2:3 (ET, 2:4) 39, 257, 281
 2:3-8 (ET, 2:4-9) 280
 2:4-5 (ET 2:5-6) 282
 2:4-8 (ET, 2:5-9) 257
 2:4a (ET, 2:5a) 257
 2:6 (ET, 2:7) 283
 2:8b (ET, 2:9b) 257
 2:9 (ET, 2:10) 286, 287
 2:12-13 (ET, 2:13-14) 280, 283, 289
 2:13 (ET, 2:14) 283
 2:13-14 (ET, 2:14-15) 283
 2:14 (ET, 2:15) 286
 2:14-15 (ET, 2:15-16) 287
 2:15 (ET, 2:16) 285, 286
 2:16 19
 3:1 280, 285
 3:1-14 279
 3:1-5:1 257
- 3:5-7 280
 3:8 288
 3:9 288
 3:10-13 287
 3:14 39, 280, 284
 4:22b 284
 5:5 238, 294
 5:13d-14 291, 292
 6:1-38 279
 6:5-6 281
 6:14 276
 6:18 282
 7:1-2 292
 7:1-3 291
 7:1a 291
 7:1b 291
 7:1b-3 291
 7:3 293
 7:8 254
 7:9 39, 292
 7:10 231
 7:11 289
 7:12 281
 7:16 281
 7:17-22 294
 8:1 289
 8:2 38
 8:3 82, 254
 8:7 173
 8:10 77
 8:11 256
 8:11a 256
 8:11b 256
 9-10 52
 9:1-12 279
 9:2-8 3
 9:8 232, 242
 9:16 289
 9:17-19 190
 9:20 289
 9:28 173
 10 49, 311
 11:17 231
 11:17b 311
 11:18-23 207
 11:21 90
 11:22 207
 13:4-12 252
 13:6 133
 13:8 232, 243

13:21 90
 15:16 217
 16:7–12 231
 20:15 276
 20:25–26 174
 21:3 206
 21:17 203
 21:18–19 231
 22:8–9 176
 22:8–10 233
 23:11 190
 23:11–13 265
 23:12–13 268
 23:14–15 253
 24:20–22 253
 25 168
 25:4 109, 168
 26:16–21 231
 28:4–5 173
 29:20–25 191
 29:25 3, 211
 30:25 19
 30:26 312
 32 168
 32:24–26 231
 34:7 19
 35:3 133
 36:10 101
 36:19 293
 36:22–23 33

Apocrypha

1–2 Maccabees 62
 1 Maccabees
 1:22 284
 4:51 284

 The Wisdom of Ben Sira / Sirach /
 Ecclesiasticus 15, 166, 179, 183, 184, 301
 11:2 195
 44–50 179
 47:1–11 179–80
 47:12–23 179
 47:13 180, 276
 47:18 180, 181
 50:5 287

 Wisdom of Solomon 3, 15, 39, 165, 175,
 179, 183, 184, 300–1
 7:1–6 175
 7:7–9:18 175
 9:8 175

Pseudepigrapha

Psalms of Solomon 4

Testament of Solomon 4, 15, 39, 165, 179,
 184, 301
 1:3 179
 1:5 179
 1:13 179

New Testament

Matthew
 1:6–16 169
 1:21 125, 140, 177
 1:25 125
 6:28–30 4
 12:42 4
 27:51 284

Mark
 15:38 284

Luke
 1:13 177
 1:31 177
 2:21 125, 140
 3:31 169
 11:31 4
 23:45 284

Hebrews 182

Ancient Bible Versions

Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS)

4QSam^a
 1 Samuel
 2:22 72

Samaritan Pentateuch (SP)

Genesis
 4:25 125

Septuagint (LXX)

1–4 Kingdoms 218

 2 Kingdoms 218
 11:3 166
 12:24 125

 3 Kingdoms 218
 4:5 216

5:22–25 286

8:12–13 70

Isaiah

38:12 188

38:13 188

1 Chronicles

3:5 166

29:23 239, 242

The Wisdom of Ben Sira / Sirach /
Ecclesiasticus

47:18 180

Manuscript Alexandrinus (LXX^A)

1 Chronicles

29:22 242

Manuscript Vaticanus (LXX^B)

1 Kingdoms

2:22 72

1 Chronicles

29:22 242

Lucianic Greek (LXX^L)

2 Kingdoms

12:25 98

3 Kingdoms

1:1 218

1:50 72

4:5 216

Peshiṭta

2 Samuel

11:3 166

12:24 125

1 Kings

1:3 203

1 Chronicles

3:5c 169

29:22 242

Wisdom of Solomon

Superscription 175

Old Latin

2 Kingdoms

12:25 98

Vulgate

1–4 Kingdoms 218

2 Kingdoms

12:9b 120

12:25 186

3 Kingdoms

1:50 72

1 Chronicles

3:5 166

Arabic

1 Kings

1:3 203

Ancient Near Eastern Sources

Asia Minor

Inscription of Azitawadda from Karatepe
(KAI 26:8) 99

Ḫattušili III

Apology (Hallo and Younger, COS, vol. 1,
pp. 199–204) 151, 152, 164, 227, 300

§§2–3 152

§10b-c 153

§12a-b 152

§12b 152

Güterbock, *Siegel aus Boğazköy: Erster
Teil*, p. 28, no. 45 152

Northern Levant

Zakir king of Hamat and Lu'ath
Donner and Röllig, *KAI*,
vol. 1, no. 202, p. 47–48 143

Barrakab, king of Sam'al
Pritchard, *ANET*, p. 655a 208

Ugarit

Aqhat

1:26–33 238

1:44–48 238

2:1–8 238

2:16–23 238

Land of Israel/Southern Levant

Gezer Calendar 20

Khirbet Qeiyafa Ostrakon 20, 20, 23

Tel Dan Inscription 23, 24, 42, 48, 56, 61,
91, 133, 141, 227

Fragment A, lines 4–5 141

Fragment A, line 9 23

Mesha Inscription 56, 61, 71

Line 31 23

Siloam Tunnel Inscription 57, 64

Samaritan Inscription no. 199 281

Egypt

Amarna Tablets 79

Pharaoh Amenhotep III

Commemorative scarab

Delden, *The Large Commemorative Scarabs
of Amenhotep*, p. 18 89

Hatshepsut

Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. 2,

§187 (p. 75–76) 157

§189 (p. 77) 157

§203 (p. 82) 156

§285 (p. 116) 156

§286 (p. 116–117) 156

§340 (p. 142) 155

§341 (pp. 142–143) 155

Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*,
vol. 2,

pp. 25–26 156

p. 26 157

p. 28 157

Schäfer, *Urkunden der ältesten
Äthiopienkönige*,

pp. 94–95 154

The Journey of Wen-Amon to
Phoenicia

Pritchard, *ANET*, pp. 25b–29a 286

Pharaoh Shishak I

Inscription at Karnak 21, 42, 62,
91

Stele at Megiddo 21, 32, 42, 61,
91

Mesopotamia and Persia

Coronation Ritual Text from Erech

Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*
pp. 245–246 261

Aššurbanipal

Streck, *Assurbanipal und die letzten
assyrischen Könige*

vol. 2, 1:1–5; pp. 2–3 140

Tadmor, “Autobiographical Apology in the
Assyrian Royal Literature”

pp. 50–51 250

Aššur-rēš-iši I

CAD, vol. 1 (A), part I, p. 146a, no. 2
139

Cyrus

Pritchard, *ANET*, p. 267 147

Darius I

Behistun Inscription 129

Document from the “City of Judah”

Horowitz, Greenberg and Zilberg, *By the
Rivers of Babylon*

pp. 38–39 98

Esarhaddon

Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons*,
Nineveh A I 5–7 §27, pp. 39–40

139

Nineveh A I 8–12 §27, p. 40 140

p. 115, §82:7–10 140

Parpola and Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian
Treaties and Loyalty Oaths* 160

Gilgamesh Epic

Goetze and Levy, “Fragment of Gilgamesh
Epic from Megiddo”

pp. 121–128 160

Idrimi king of Alalah

Pritchard, *ANET*, pp. 557–558 143

Kilamuwa king of Ya'dy/Sam'al

Donner and Röllig, *KAI*

vol. 1, no. 24, pp. 4–5 146

Sargon I

Lewis, *The Sargon Legend* 129, 145, 149,

150, 161, 164, 300

lines 2–12 146

lines 12–13 147

lines 14–32 147

Westenholz, *Legends of the Kings of Akkade*

pp. 34–35 148

pp. 102–139 159

Cooper and Heimpel, “The Sumerian Sargon Legend,” pp. 67–82 148

Sargon II

Asher Charter 149

Fuchs, *Die Inschriften Sargons II. aus Khorsabad*

pp. 37–38, and 292–293

lines 34–43 150

Letter 204 (Parpola, *The Correspondence of Sargon II*, p. 160)

line 10 82

Tadmor, “Fragments of an Assyrian Stela of Sargon II,”

pp. 495–504 160

The Deeds of Šuppiluliuma 90

Xerxes I

Pritchard, *ANET*, p. 315b 143

Schmitt, *Die altpersischen Inschriften der Achaimeniden*,

p. 162 (XPf, §4, lines A–K), 158

Jewish Hellenistic Sources

Josephus Flavius 165

Against Apion

1:112–115 24

1:118–120 24

Jewish Antiquities

7:158 125, 179

7:343 203

7:350 238

7:354–358 240

7:360 238

7:382 240

7:389 202

8 219

Jewish War

5:5.5–6 284

Greco-Roman Sources

Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica*

17:77.5–6 90

Herodotus, *Historia*

1:7–13 149

1:91 149

1:105 20

1:108 146

2:104 20

2:106 20

3:91 20

4:39 20

7:2–3 158

Homeric literature 268, 269

Iliad 268

Nicolaus of Damascus,

Fragment 66:2–4 146

Plutarch

Alexander

27 157

Artaxerxes

27:1–2 90

Rabbinic Literature

Targum Onqelos

Deut 32:30 188

Targum Jonathan

2 Sam 12:9b 120

2 Sam 12:24 125

2 Sam 12:25 98

Targum Chronicles

1 Chr 3:5 166

Abot deRabbi Nathan

Text A, I 182

Song of Songs Rabbah

I:1 4, 181

I:5-8 4

I:11 4

Qobelet Rabbah

I:1 181

I:2-3 4

2:5 4

Seder Olam Rabbah

14 189

15 181

Sifre

Num 6:24 180

Deut 28:10 180

*Mishnah**Yoma*

5:1 284

*Babylonian Talmud**Berachot*

57b 4

62b 202

Sabbath

30b 182

Erubin

14a-b 36

Pesachim

54a 140

Baba Batra

15a 181

Medieval Commentaries

Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra (Raaba)

Commentary

Qoh 1:1 181

Rabbi David Kimchi (RaDaK)

Commentary

2 Sam 12:25 176

1 Kgs 1:1 202, 203

I:15 204

1 Chr 3:5 166, 170

1 Chr 29:22 241

Rabbi Isaiah of Trani

Commentary

2 Sam 12:25 99

Rabbi Levi ben Gershon (Gershonides)

Commentary

1 Kgs 7:23 36

1 Chr 29:22 245

Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki (Rashi)

Commentary

2 Sam 12:25 99

1 Kgs 1 203

Qoh 1:1 181

Pseudo-Rashi, Commentary on Chronicles

167

1 Chr 29:22 241

2 Chr 2:4 (ET, 2:5) 257

